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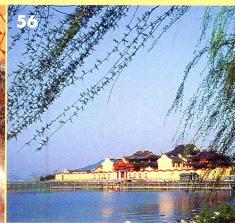
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Photos & Article by Shi Baoxiu

The Tingjiang River may be unfamiliar to most people. In fact there are many stories related to the homeland of the Chaozhou and Shantou people since the Tingjiang River is the upper course of the Hanjiang River.









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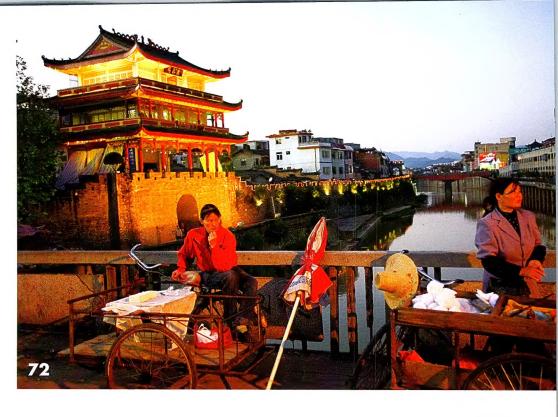
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## Omenish to Cherish

It has been three years since the last Jiuzhaigou cover story in Sichuan Province was published. The nature reserve there has little changed and we are pleased to see limited damages. Jiuzhaigou now has an average of 10,000 visitors every day, and has already reached its maximum tourism capacity. Preservation has been enforced in the past few years and walking trails, traffic control and regulations restricting the movement of vistors have been established and impoesd. Of course, the success depends on vistors' selfdiscipline and willingness to cherish this natural treasure.

Wang Dajun is a photographer who has been visited Jiuzhaigou numerous times over the past 20 years. His photographs beautifully display the region in its seasonal beauty and variety. The tourist guide, cleaner, waitress, and a Tibetan vendor... whom our reporter has met in Jiuzhaigou are all committed to natural preservation. Each of their stories provides us with an insight to appreciate what we presently have.

Unlike the busy Jiuzhaigou, it is hard to believe that the present deserted Niya in Xinjiang, was once a rich and varied kingdom that thrived deep in today's Taklamakan Desert some 1,600 years ago. The extinction has left many questions unanswered. Today, archaeologists and scientists concluded that there must have been some irresistible disasters resulted to its sudden demise. Niya appears to have lost a battle with nature. Without doubt, the ruined city is a great place for those interested in both history and adventure to explore. However, be warned that the journey highlights an oasis that was swallowed by the desert and exterminated. Perhaps this gives us a chilling glimpse of our future survival if we don't care for our planet.

For those who are interested in folklores we suggest a trip to Kashi in West Xinjiang, home to 32 ethnical groups, 6 more than Yunnan Province. If you are attracted by Tibet's colourful life, we present you the story of the common colours seen in Tibet. Yellow, blue, red, and white... will surely amaze you.

Finally, wishing you all a colourful year of the Rat in the lunar year... Kung Hei Fat Choy!



#### New Alliance between China and Australia Hotels

A strategic alliance has been formed between Metro Hotels (Australia) and Argyle Hotels (China). The alliance will involve the provision of sales support, along with promotion and representation at relevant trade shows. Each side can assist the other's exposure and brand awareness among agents, wholesalers and the general public in their base country. Both sides cherish this opportunity as neither were represented in both countries but operated in similar markets.

#### Great Wheel of China to be built

'Climb the Great Wall, Fly the Great Wheel' will certainly be a new theme for Beijing. Higher than both the London Eye and the Singapore Flyer, the Beijing Great Wheel, which opens in March, will tower 208 metres (682 ft) when finished in 2009. It would then make it the highest and largest in the world. The giant ferris wheel will have 48 air conditioned observation capsules, each of which can carry up to 40 passengers, and on a good day even the Great Wall is expected to be visible from the wheel.



#### **Chinese Traditional Opera Theatre Opens**

Mei Lanfang Grand Theatre affiliated by the China National Beijing Opera Troupe in Beijing is opening soon again. After three years of construction, the theater has been completed recently and is receiving final checkup. The theatre takes its name after a renowned Beijing Opera master, Mei Lanfang. The theater is the first especially designed for Beijing Opera performances in the capital. Located on the north end of Beijing's downtown Financial Street, the theatre can hold more than 1,000 audiences at one time.



Starting from January 2, 2008, Air China will launch flight from Beijing to Pyongyang. There will be three flights a week. The new route will offer convenience for the exchanges and cooperation between China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in culture, education and technology. It also provides a convenient option for passengers from Europe, the United States and Japan to travel to Pyongyang. By last year, Air China had 72 international and regional routes, linking Beijing with 43 cities in 28 countries.



## Six New Scenic Spots to be Opened along Great Wall in Beijing

There are currently four scenic spots along the Great Wall and six will be newly added. The Beijing Municipal Cultural Heritage Administration has decided to open more parts of the Great Wall, after careful refurbishment has been done to make it safe enough. Every year, Beijing invests more than 10 million yuan on the project.

At present, about 30 km of the Great Wall in Beijing are open to visitors, including the famous Juyongguan Pass and the Badaling, Simatai and Mutianyu sections of the Great Wall.

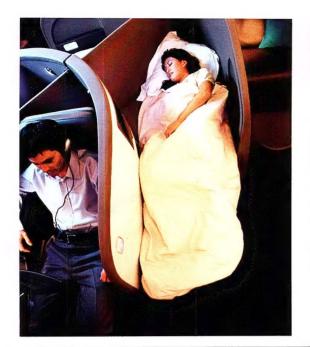
#### New Tripod Built for Tourist in Yantai

A giant tripod building built for tourist purposes has just been opened in Haiyang, south of Yantai City in east China's Shandong Province. The 28-metre tall tripod building is located on top of Mt. Tashan in Haiyang. The 2-storey tripod building's three legs are hollow columns with a 3 metre outer diameter and 2.4 metre inner diameter. Inside them are equipped with elevators. Inside the body of tripod, visitors can find circular corridors and fanned out rooms. On top platform of the tripod building, visitors can have a chance to enjoy local landscape. The landmark structure is also a place for dining, entertainment, and exhibitions.



#### Luxury Train to Start in China

Post Olympics 2008, a new luxury train operator will begin year-round services in China. Tangula Luxury Trains will offer passengers exclusive rail journeys to remote regions of China with three trains carrying a total of 96 guests each. The northern route traverses the Tibetan plateau from Beijing to Lhasa, Tibet (5 days/4 nights). The southern route travels from Beijing to Lijiang, Yunnan (5 days/4 nights), exploring the scenery of Guangxi and Yunnan provinces. The remaining routes (4 days/3 night) go in the reverse direction on both routes. The service is provided by Rail Partners Inc., the owning company of Tangula Luxury Trains, which will sell through marketing-mailing tools and Tangula website.



### Luxurious Service between Hong Kong and London

Air New Zealand has just celebrated its 1st anniversary of the launching direct flight services between Hong Kong and London. A team of Boeing 747 crafts serves between two places to provide qualified services. The crafts are equipped with three different cabins, namely the Business Premier, Pacific Premium Economy and Pacific Economy. The luxurious BP cabins are equipped with the longest 6' 7.5" flat beds. During the journey, passengers can enjoy more than 450 hours VOD entertainments such as newest movies, TVs, music and video games.

Air New Zealand provides the latest fare offers from now to 30 lune 2008. For more information:

www.airnewzealand.com.hk

Hong Kong ~ London HK\$4,600 Hong Kong ~ New Zealand HK\$6,200



## 'Literacy One' Takes to the Skies on Historic Flight

Cathay Pacific Airways, Room to Read and Scholastic Inc announced the historic flight of 'Literacy One', a new Boeing 777-300ER aircraft that will carry a portion of generously donated books into the hands of children in the developing world. The campaign kicked off last September and will continue throughout the 2007-2008 school year. This flight kicks-off Room to Read's campaign to move beyond the 5,000-library milestone, with an ambitious plan to be at 10,000 libraries by the end of 2010. To date, these projects have impacted the lives of more than 1.3 million children in the developing world with programs in Cambodia, India, Laos, Nepal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. Perhaps you may also interest in sharing books or any forms of donation. For more information: www.roomtoread.org



### **Lufthansa Website with HRS System**



Passengers can now reserve room services through website of

#### www.lufthansa.com

HRS (Hotel Reservation System) operates a global electronic hotel reservation system for business and private travellers based on a database of more than 208,000 hotels in all price categories in Germany, Europe and the rest of the world. It enables users to make direct bookings free of charge, with immediate confirmation and at continually-updated special HRS prices. Room prices quoted for chosen hotels are guaranteed for the booking in question. Lufthansa has also set up HRS branch offices in Paris, London and Shanghai, China.

## **Love Chocolate Charity Sale 2008**

Show your love by purchasing chocolate packs at HK\$30 or premium gift boxes at HK\$88. Your kindness can help to support St. Christopher's Home's service. Action now! Sheng Kung Hui St. Christopher's Home, founded in 1935, is the largest non-governmental organisation in Hong Kong today. It provides small group home service for children who cannot receive adequate family care.

Date: 1 January 2008 ~ 14 February 2008

Venue: more than 20 malls in Hong Kong, outlets of Health Plus, Eugene Group, Neway and properties under Sino's

management.

For more information: www.skhsch.org.hk



#### **Zhejiang**

#### Hangzhou invest in helping English Tourists

To spare individual tourists the trouble of using sign language to elicit information and then ending up getting lost as a result of faulty translation, the Hangzhou Tourism Commission is rolling out its taxi information system. Under the system, a taxi driver connects his non-Chinese speaking passenger to a call centre via a mobile phone where volunteers who speak English, Japanese, Korean or French are on hand to make the translation. Whenever the passenger needs help, he can just pass a calling card to the taxi driver and that driver would dial the call centre to avail of the services of a volunteer.

#### **England/France**

#### **New Eurostar Terminal Opened**

The new Eurostar terminal at St Pancras, London has been opened. The sleek new station opens its doors to Eurostar services in year-end of 2007. Billed as a fashionable new venue rather than a simple station, the new terminal has bars, restaurants, cafes and shops, including Europe's longest champagne bar at 90 metres.

Furthermore, the new service to Paris will take two hours and 15 minutes, 20 minutes less than before. Journeys to Brussels and Lille will also be quicker by 20 minutes at one hour and 51 minutes and one hour and 20 minutes, respectively.

#### China

#### 2009 Solar Eclipse tours in China

Good news for astronomy fans! On July 22, 2009, China and the South Pacific will experience a total eclipse of the sun and tours to see it are selling out almost as soon as they're announced. Sirius Travels, a company specialising in eclipse tours, said their first tour filled up so fast they had to open another one and are thinking about a third. The best place to see the eclipse is parts of Asia, and China is one of the prime destinations. As for the Chinese Space Agency, it is even offering a one-month space tour called the Boomerang Eclipse Sun Tour. This can provide funds for their space agency, and to test some of their equipment for a lunar landing in 2020.



#### **Tibet**

#### Mt. Qomolangma to become hotspot during Olympics

The Tibet Tourism Bureau has announced to launch several kinds of activities on the mountain during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, aiming to attract more tourists to Tibet. The Olympic torch will reach Mt. Qomolangma in May 2008, and related work is under preparation by Tibet Autonomous Region government. The bureau believed that climbing the mountain in winter would cost less, and people could appreciate the beautiful snowscape, but in summer, the foggy weather would make it hard for people to see it.

#### Beijing

#### Lavished Accommodations for 2008

A projected 1.5 million visitors are expected in Beijing for the 2008 Olympic Games, and luxury hotels are making sure each and every one of them will have perfect accommodation. Everywhere you look in town, hotels are either being built or renovated. And most of the new ones are in the high-end luxury category. Beijing has long lagged behind in this market, offering only a handful of truly posh hotels that really meet international standards of service. But as the Olympic Games are approaching, the hotel industry is really kicked off booming.





#### China

#### Happiest Cities in China

If you are seeking happiness in China, Hangzhou should be the first to go, as this capital of Zhejiang Province topped a magazine poll of more than 3 million citizens rating the country's '10 happiest cities'. Shenyang, capital city of northeast China's Liaoning Province, finished runner-up in the poll conducted by Oriental Outlook magazine, followed by the Zhejiang Province cities of Ningbo and Taizhou. Zhuhai and Zhongshan, both in south China's Guangdong Province, were fifth and sixth, respectively. Qingdao, in eastern Shandong Province, was seventh. Shanghai, the country's commercial hub, ranked eighth, followed by the national capital Beijing. Chengdu, capital of southwestern Sichuan Province, finished up the



#### China

#### Holiday train fares may not rise

National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) announced that train fares may not rise during the 40-day peak season around the 2008 Spring Festival. The NDRC released a report on rising oil prices on its website, which has caused misunderstandings among readers. The report, which has since been withdrawn, said it would be hard to keep ticket prices unchanged during the upcoming peak travel season. But NDRC has clarified that it was only an analytical report about the current difficulties public transportation face. China's railways transported more than 156 million people during the 2007 Spring Festival peak season, almost 4 million on average every day.

#### Hunan

#### China lets 'French Spider-Man' in to boost tourism

A daredevil climber known as the 'French Spider-Man', who was previously expelled from the country earlier, has been allowed into China again. Reason behind was that authorities hope his presence could boost tourism. Alain Robert was expelled this year for illegally scaling various buildings. He just arrived in Changsha, capital city of Hunan Province, to scale a section of Tianmen Mountain, which attracted curious tourists to the area. The peak of Tianmen is 1,518 metres from the ground and he ascended a massive cave on the mountain with no protective equipment.

#### China

#### 20 more Shangri-la hotels in China

Kerry Food and Grain Group, a leading global food supplier, plans to launch 20 more Shangri-la hotels in China, aiming to top the number to 50 Shangri-la hotels by 2010. The new hotels will be located in the capital cities, as well as other cities, so as to meet the rising demand for hotel accommodation.

#### Shanxi

#### Pingyao Hotel Attracts Foreigners

The De Ju Yuan Hotel in Pingyao Ancient City, a UNESCO World Heritage Site named in 1997, combines perfectly preserved traditional Chinese courtyards dating back to the Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644), with wide selection of foreign magazines and spirits including whisky, vodka and even Baileys Irish Cream. The hotel's English- and French-speaking owner said she welcomed many French and Europeans. The hotel never hikes prices during high season, which runs from April to early October. Rooms at the De Ju Yuan cost from 165 to 368 yuan per niaht.





#### Gansu

#### China's Ancient Buddhist Frescoes Deteriorating

Mogao Caves in remote Gansu Province are falling in pieces. Technicians now try to save this crumbling 1,000-year-old fresco by applying liquid bonding agent. Among the world's greatest collections of Buddhist art, the cave frescoes date back 1,650 years, created as eternal tributes to Buddha. A race is on to arrest the deterioration of the UN World Heritage site, which occupies 492 different cave temples along a 1.6-kilometre (one-mile) long cliff face near the ancient Silk Road town of Dunhuang. The Dunhuang Academy, responsible for the caves' maintenance, explained that the decline has accelerated due to desertification caused by climate change. Sandstorms from the nearby Kumtag desert upset the fragile environmental balance inside the caves.

#### **Airlines**

#### Onboard Communication for Air China

Air China will provide inflight phone calls and Internet access to passengers on international flights this year, probably before the Beijing Olympic Games. It will be the first of China's big three carriers to adopt an onboard satellite phone service. Air China, the nation's largest air carrier, plans to install the system on some flights.

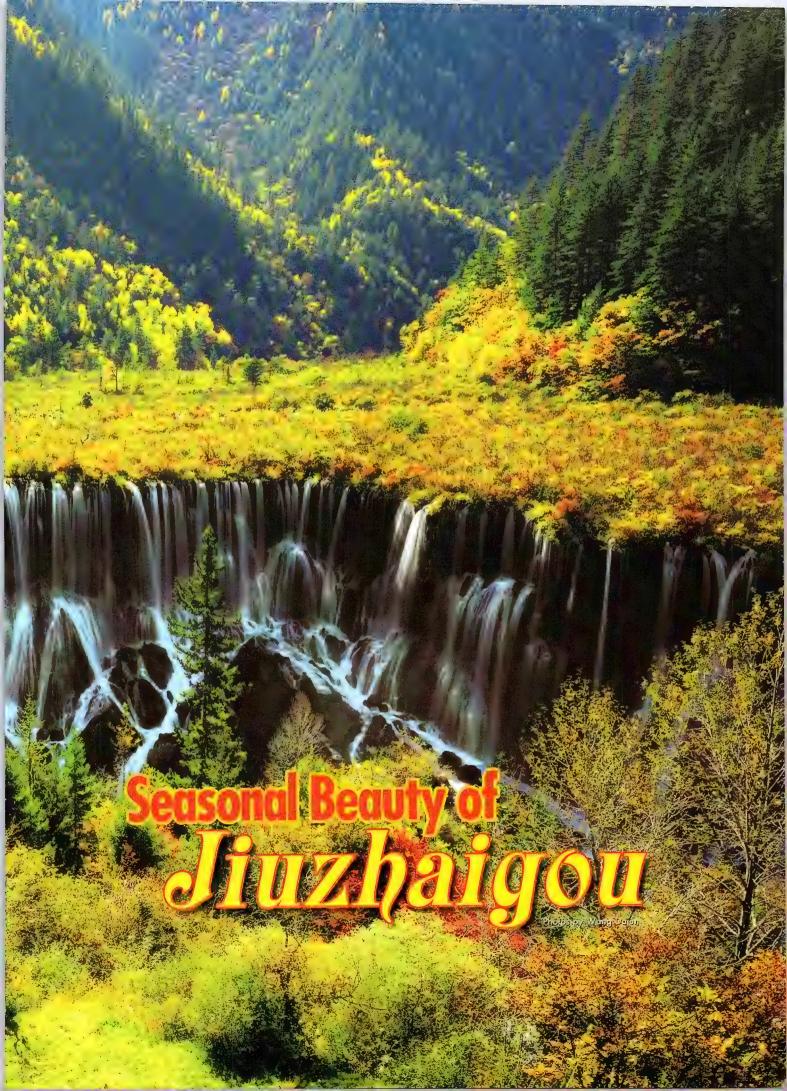
Previously, Shenzhen Airlines, a smaller carrier, announced in last September, to provide passengers with inflight communications including emails, messages and voice calls. The services will be installed across Shenzhen Airlines' full fleet of Boeing 737 and Airbus A320 aircraft by the middle of 2009. Three will be in use before the Olympics this August.

#### China

#### New Changes to China's Holiday System

Since 1999 workers in China have been rewarded a trio of weeklong holidays. Each year-on the May 1st Labour Day, October 1st National Day, and Lunar New Year — most enjoy a 'Golden Week' away from the job. But now this is likely to change. The government has mooted reforms that would reduce May Day observance to a single day and distribute the rest over a series of one-day holidays for the traditional Tomb Sweeping day (Qing Ming Festival), Dragon Boat festival and Mid-Autumn festival. The number of annual holidays would rise from 10 to 11. The change stems partly from practical concerns over the huge stress Golden Weeks place on trains, planes, hotels and tourist areas.













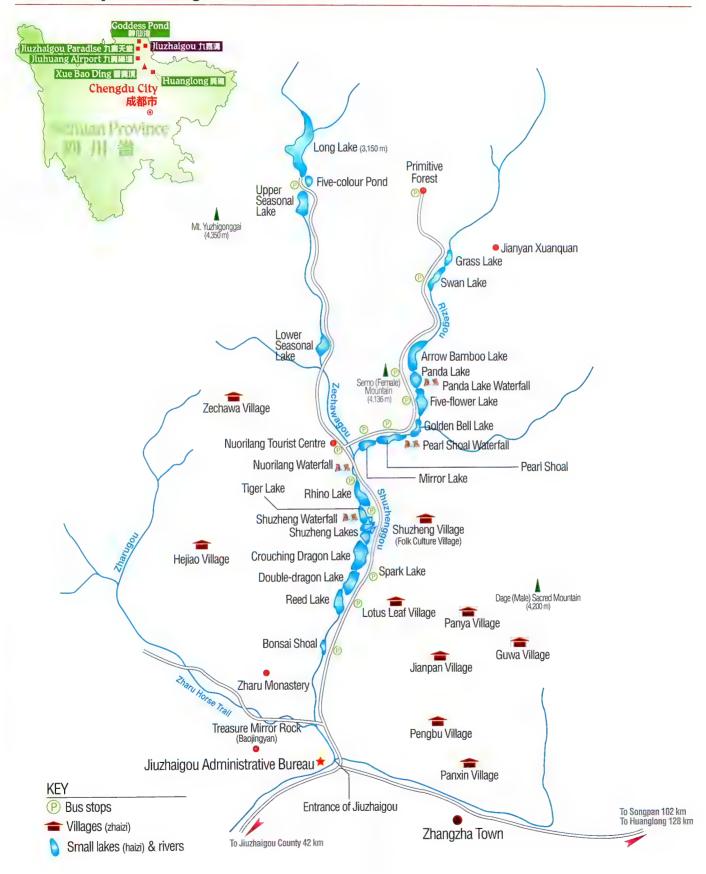




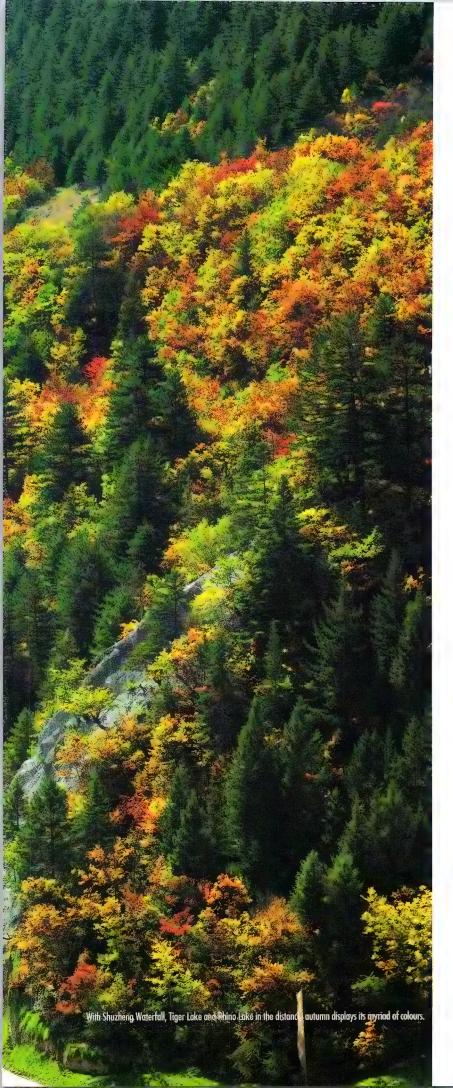


Lovers of Jiuzhaigou (literally, Nine-Village Valley) lavish such titles as 'paradise on earth' and 'fairy-tale wonderland' on the stunning area. I prefer instead to consider Jiuzhaigou a magician that can conjure up different landscapes to suit the changing moods of the audience. Snow in winter, red leaves in autumn, lakes in summer and flowers in spring... those are the seasonal contrasts of Jiuzhaigou. The tones and colours keep revolving, touching the hearts of visitors in a different way each time they come.

### Tourist Map of Jiuzhaigou Scenic Zone







## Jiuzhaigou Beyond a Fairy Tale Photos by Wang Dajun Article by Mickey Ching

I'd heard much about the beauty of Jiuzhaigou before I set off - crystal clear haizi (small lakes), tapestries of autumn forests, snow-capped mountains and much, much more. But there remained a gap between imagination and reality. This is definitely a case of 'seeing is believing'.

'Dear passengers, I'm sorry to inform you that the flight to Jiuhuang Airport is now delayed due to unfavourable weather conditions. Take-off time is unclear at the moment."

It was 6 am in the morning when I heard the announcement at Shuangliu Airport, Chengdu, Sichuan Province. The bad news was broadcast 50 minutes ahead of the original departure time. The information signboard informed passengers that all flights to Jiuhuang Airport were suspended due to a rainstorm. I had particularly chosen this early flight to save 500 yuan on the fare of the afternoon flights. But I ended up stuck at the airport. I had to amuse myself with the idea that beauty does not come without a price.

#### High Cost of 500 Yuan

After a tiring morning of anxious waiting, the plane finally took off at 12:15 pm. When I woke up on the plane, half conscious, I had already landed on the 3,440 m highland. Jiuhuang Airport, which has come into service since 2003, ranks third among all highland airports in terms of altitude after Bangda Airport (4,300 m above sea level) in eastern Tibet and Gongkar Airport (3,500 m above sea level) at Lhasa. To my surprise, there was no tourist bus service when I arrived. This was indeed strange as it was high tourist season. Luckily, I came across a family of four and we rented a car together to go to Jiuzhaigou Scenic Zone.

The highway to Jiuzhaigou was good. I saw Tibetan houses and flying prayer flags along the way. The friendly Tibetans waved to us when we passed by. We waved back, warmed by their friendliness. After 4 pm we arrived at the entrance of Jiuzhaigou, 7 hours behind schedule. The cost of extreme fatigue for



a saving of 500 yuan was definitely too high! As the scenic zone closes at 7 pm in the high season, it was impossible for us to enter. People who have just landed on the highland should take time to adapt to the altitude on the first day. It is unwise to have too many physically demanding activities. Therefore, I decided to call it a day, and take a good rest for tomorrow's entry into Jiuzhaigou.

#### A Quick Tour on the Sightseeing Bus

I was ready to buy a ticket to enter the valley at 8 am the next morning. The main gate into Jiuzhaigou was thronged with people. The tour groups, small and large alike, were scattered all over the scenic zone. The blowing of car horns and the battered voices of the loud speakers of the guides added to the

boisterous scene. It was like a Disneyland. I had already worked up a sweat when I got my ticket. The ticket to enter Jiuzhaigou was good for two days in a row. If you plan a two-day tour, you can tell the ticket seller who will print your picture and fingerprint on the ticket. Inside the scenic zone, crowds of tourists were waiting for the sightseeing bus. The management of the scenic zone was strict. Those who got on the bus halfway were asked to show their tickets. The quota of tourists allowed to enter the scenic zone a day is as many as 10,000. To disperse such a large crowd, visitors are transported to different sections of the scenic zone depending on situation. When I was there, most of the tourists were escorted off at Shuzhenggou. The guide introduced various scenic spots along the way, offering a general picture of the



zone to tourists.

Jiuzhaigou is well established and suitable for backpackers. In a 'Y' shape, it consists of Shuzhenggou, Rizegou and Zechawagou. Shuzhenggou, known for its haizi, contains about 40 lakes of all sizes. Rizegou is known for having the widest, highest and most spectacular waterfalls in Jiuzhaigou, the Pearl Shoal Waterfall, Nuorilang Waterfall and Panda Lake Waterfall. Zechawagou boasts Long Lake and Five-colour Pond. As Shuzhenggou is on the left, a seat on the left side of the bus provides a better position to see the landscape initially. As the tourist bus headed to Shuzheng Lakes, I couldn't help taking pictures of Shuzhenggou to warm myself up. Afterwards, I had a quick look at the Folk Culture Village.

#### Overly Crowded Long Lake

After my warm-up excursion to Shuzhenggou, I decided to challenge myself by visiting Long Lake in Zechawagou first. With an altitude of 3,150 m, Long Lake is the highest spot in Jiuzhaigou. I've seen Long Lake in picture albums. Nestled in snow-covered mountains, the small lake has a mystical quality with its deep, blue waters. I recognised a withered tree that resembled an old man. Long Lake would be best appreciated in solitude, but this was not to be. Once I got off the tourist bus, I was instantly overwhelmed by a huge crowd of tourists. I tried to avoid getting passers-by in my photos, but in vain. Despite the overcrowded situation, it remains a must-go destination. Its tranquillity and sense of endlessness would be a treasured memory for all those who visit the lake.

1. The colourful Long Lake in





#### Bazaar in Nuorilang

The summer scenic spots in Zechawagou are Long Lake and Five-colour Pond. Summer is not the right time to visit Upper Seasonal Lake and Lower Seasonal Lake. There is nothing interesting to see, and anyway, the tourist bus will not stop there. Most tourists go to other scenic spots by tourist bus after Five-colour Pond. Nuorilang Tourist Centre is a midway bus stop.

It is also the only place in the whole scenic zone that allows cooks to fire up their stoves. To prevent any environmental damage, the sewage and waste from the dining hall are transported by special trucks out of the valley for disposal. At 1 pm, tourists flocked to the dining hall that provided three types of buffet, priced at 40, 60 and 80 yuan. I decided to be generous with myself this time and chose the 80 yuan buffet. The biggest advantage of this top-price buffet was that less people chose it. I could take time to pick my food and eat at my leisure. With hunger making food my number one priority, I did not notice that the lower floor of the dining hall was a large shop, indeed a huge marketplace. The style of the souvenirs here was basically the same as that in Shuzhenggou Folk Culture Village, but the variety was larger. The indoor shopping provided a comfortable environment, free from the strong highland sunshine and sudden downpours of rain. But don't linger at the shop and forget about the beauty of Jiuzhaigou!

#### Secret Garden in Primitive Forest

After the luncheon, it was 2:30 pm. Most of the tourists chose to go downhill. I preferred taking a bus

- In winter, the Nuorilang Waterfall freezes into stalactite ice pillars hung on the rocks.
- 2. Five-flower Lake covered in spring snow offers a different scene.





Fire-red maple leaves and the reflection of an azure sky on the surface of Mirror Lake.

- 2. Jiuzhaigou, known as 'paradise on earth', was once the habitat of the giant panda.
- 3. Autumn at Panda Lake.

to the most remote scenic spot — Rizegou, the primitive forest. As too many people went down the mountain, I decided to take 'the road less travelled'. Anyway, I would be entering the valley again the next day for the downhill scenic spots.

My decision proved absolutely correct. The primitive forest in the afternoon was extraordinarily quiet. It was more like my own secret garden, where I could have chanted or meditated in peace. It was a completely different scene from the Long Lake in the morning. There were dozens of tourists in the primitive forest, but not enough for it to feel crowded. The dense foliage of the forest enveloped visitors in a primeval embrace, the branches and green leaves rustling in the breeze.

As water is the soul of Jiuzhaigou, green is the area's insignia colour and nowhere more so than in

the forest. The primitive woods boasted much protected vegetation, with over 2,000 species of plants. Of these, over 20 are endangered species, for example, the primitive *Tropaeolum majus* and *Kingdonia uniflora*. Strolling through the forest, I passed by Grass Lake and Swan Lake on a trail flanked with plants and other lakes. Most tourists to Jiuzhaigou focus on the lakes. Personally, I would have felt cheated if I'd missed this walk in this primitive forest.

#### The Must-see Nuorilang

Since I did not prefer an intensive tour, after leaving Swan Lake, I decided to take a bus from Swan Lake to Nuorilang Waterfall to inspect this section in an attempt to repeat it on foot the next day. In this section is found Arrow Bamboo Lake, Panda

Lake, Panda Lake Waterfall, Five-flower Lake, Golden Bell Lake, Pearl Shoal, Pearl Shoal Waterfall, Mirror Lake and Nuorilang Waterfall.

Like Long Lake, Nuorilang Waterfall is one of the landmarks of Jiuzhaigou — a must-see for tourists. It is currently the widest highland waterfall in China. In winter, the frozen waterfall hangs spectacularly over the rocks in the form of stalactitic pillars. In late autumn, the waterfall is surrounded with red leaves. The pounding waterfall is framed by a myriad of colours. It is a popular site for photographers to point and shoot their cameras.

#### Easy Sightseeing on Foot

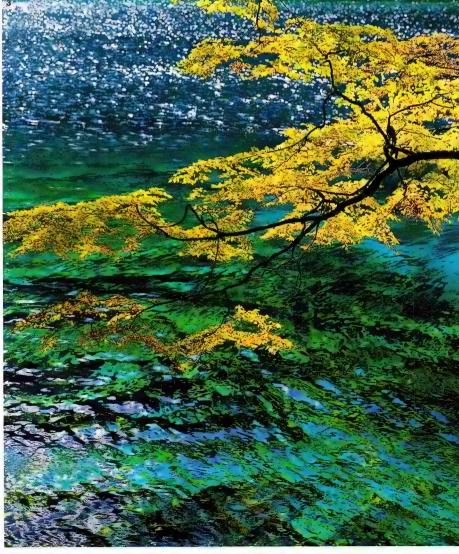
I entered the valley again after a night of rest. With just a quick review of yesterday's itinerary, I knew I had taken an overly slow and easy pace. I had to visit more scenic spots today. My plan was that I had to complete, on foot, the remaining scenic spots in Rizegou in the morning. In the afternoon, I would cover the scenic spots in Shuzhenggou by bus or on foot, depending on the time. I thought there might be fewer people if I set off earlier, but in the high season, there are lots of 'early birds'. The well-known scene of a fight between Jet Li and Tony Leung in the movie Hero at Arrow Dwarf Bamboo Lake fuelled the fame there. Quite a number of tourists took a 'Say cheers!' picture with the lake in the background. People rushed to the best spot for the picture before others could take their place. Though it was crowded, a deft photographer could still take great shots here.

After a few snaps, I started walking from Arrow Dwarf Bamboo Lake to Panda Lake on the wood-planked trail far away from the tourist bus road. The trails through Jiuzhaigou are good, and the direction signs clear. Every so often along the route, there was a clear map showing the location. At the place where the trail met the bus road, tourists could conveniently hop onto a bus.

Panda Lake got its name because pandas lived in the area in the past. Among all the lakes, the tidal variation of Panda Lake is the most obvious. There is a difference of 80 metres between high and low tides, 4 times that of Nuorilang Waterfall (20 to 30 metres). In that regard, Panda Lake is by no means a lesser spectacle than Nuorilang Waterfall. Further along the trail, I encountered Five-flower Lake, one of the wonders of Jiuzhaigou. A pair of mandarin ducks swam romantically. In two days I had seen quite a number of lakes and I thought at times that I had too many pictures of the lakes in the same style. With the addition of a pair of living creatures, Five-flower Lake provided another great picture.

Following the direction markers, I had no difficulty reaching Pearl Shoal Waterfall, Pearl Shoal and Mirror Lake. Pearl Shoal Waterfall is the third largest













waterfall in Jiuzhaigou. To set up a good shot that was not blocked by tourists was definitely difficult. Strings of prayer flags were tied in front of the waterfall. They looked charming, but increased the difficulty of taking an open angle shot at the waterfall.

#### Six Lakes in Six Styles

Having seen Rizegou on foot in the morning, I returned to the same old hangout, Nuorilang, for lunch. During lunch I could make plans for my visit to Shuzhenggou, both by bus and on foot.

I had taken pictures of Nuorilang Waterfall, Shuzheng Village and Shuzheng Waterfall on the previous day. Reluctantly, I decided not to revisit them in the afternoon. Rhino Lake, Tiger Lake and Double-dragon Lake are not far from each other. It was possible to visit them on foot. I could make the decision when it was closer to the time. In the afternoon, the light for photography was perfect. I was certain that I could take some great shots of the lakes under the blue sky. Occasionally I saw hydraulic prayer wheels, which brought an interesting cultural touch to the natural existence of Jiuzhaigou. I hopped



onto a tourist bus to Crouching Dragon Lake. Afterwards, I headed for Spark Lake, Reed Lake and Bonsai Lake one after another. If time does not permit, I suggest you to skip Bonsai Lake. Reed Lake is the first large lake in Jiuzhaigou, with dense highland reeds. In the breeze, the reeds swayed in waves, presenting a fantastic scene. The reeds brought a distinctive charm to the lake. At Spark Lake, sunshine on the water's surface creates glittering sparkles.

#### Zharu Monastery Missed

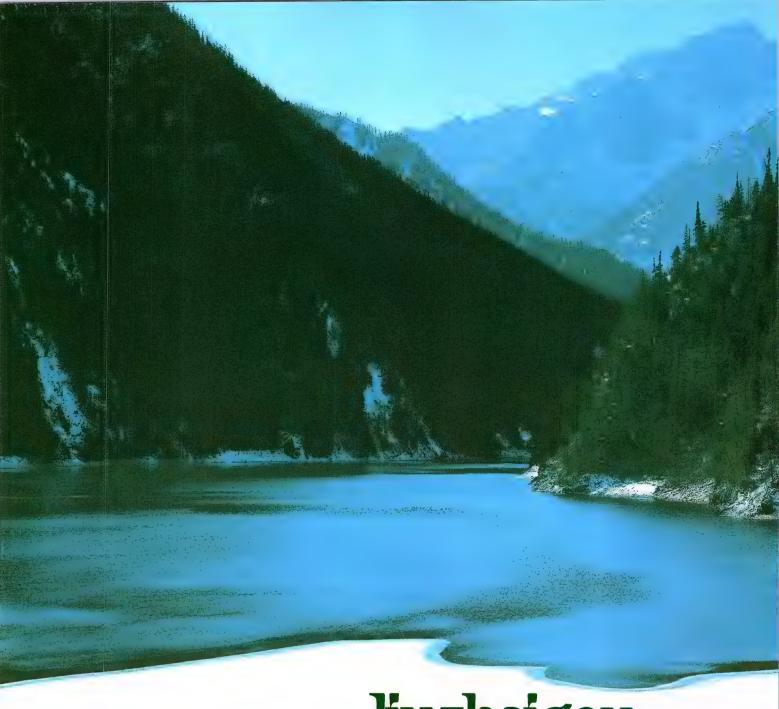
After my last planned stop, Bonsai Lake, I could take a bus directly to the entrance of the valley. The tourist bus would not stop midway. Looking at the map, I found there were a few scenic spots — Lotus Leaf Village, Zharu Monastery and Treasure Mirror (Baojing) Rock — on the way from the shoal to the main gate of the valley. I was told that it would take two hours on foot from Bonsai Lake to Zharu Monastery. Alternatively, I could take a bus to the terminus and then walk back for more than half an hour to Zharu Monastery. Some tourists said that Zharu Monastery was being renovated and was not open to tourists. For that reason I made no more inquiries and dropped the idea. However, a pair of



French tourists with whom I made friends asked me whether I had visited the monastery. It dawned on me that the monastery might not be under renovation. Located along the Zharu Horse Trail, the monastery is the largest in the Jiuzhaigou area and enjoys the most fame. On the fifteenth day of the third month of the lunar calendar each year, it holds the Mazi Festival with lots of activities and excitement. I regretted that I believed the words of others so readily...

- 1. The swaying reeds at Reed Lake.
- 2. Souvenirs at the Jiuzhaigou Folk Culture Village. (by Mickey Ching)
- 3. Pearl Shoal Waterfall rumbles down in grand style.



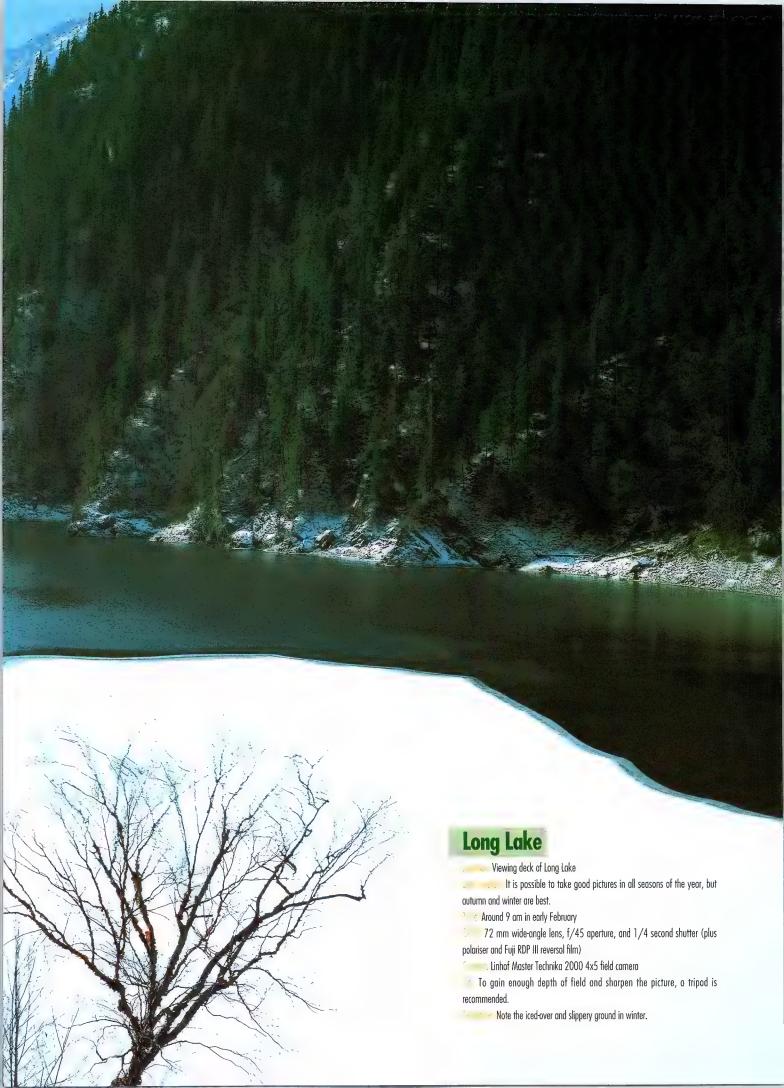


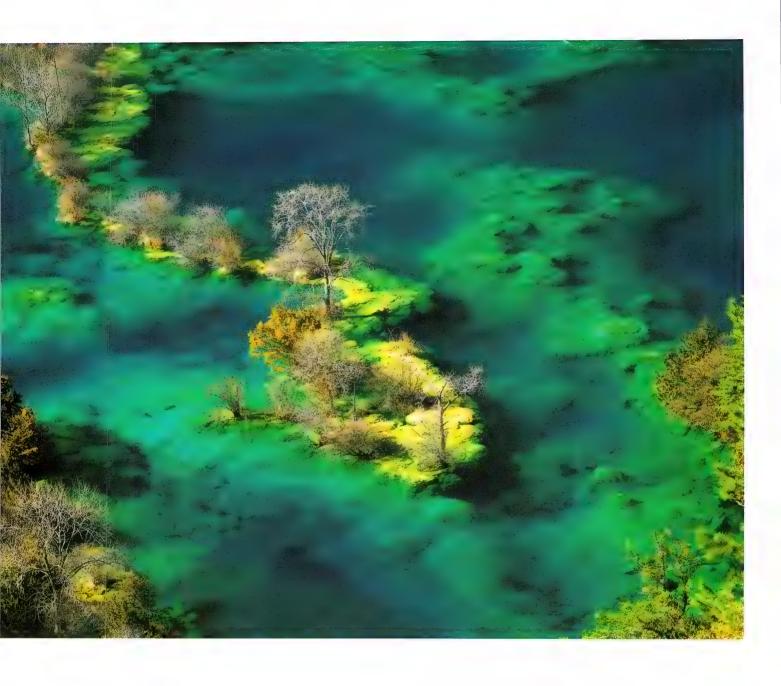
## Shooting in Jiuzhaigou

Photos & Article by Wang Dajun

People who have visited Jiuzhaigou would tell you it does not take a professional photographer to take a great shot in this magical place — just press the shutter button and take a perfect postcard picture. Though this might be a slight exaggeration, the natural beauty of Jiuzhaigou is certainly undeniable.

However, the more beautiful the landscape is, and the more people there are taking pictures, the more difficult it is to capture the essence of the scenery. Skill, timing and angle are indispensable for a great picture. Let's look at the professional opinion of photographer Wang Dajun, who has visited Jiuzhaigou repeatedly in the past two decades. His insights might help in capturing those elusive perfect pictures.





## Spark Lakes

On the cliff beside the road in the Spark Lakes area
Summer, autumn and winter

Around 4 pm in early February

f/32 aperture, 1/4 second shutter (plus polariser)

Linhof Master Technika 2000 4x5 field camera, 150 mm lens

Take a high angle to shoot the lake surface. The cliff is rugged and there is no trodden trail up the cliff. Be extremely careful. A fall may lead to camera damage or personal injury.



# Double-dragon Lake - Crouching Dragon Lake - Spark Lake

On the cliff to the left of Double-dragon Lake

It is possible to take good pictures in all seasons of the year, but summer and autumn are best.

Around 11:30 am in early June

f/45 aperture, and 1/2 second shutter (plus polariser and Fuji RDP III reversal film)

Linhof Master Technika 2000 4x5 field camera, 150 mm lens
Fuji RDP III best reflects the green colours of Jiuzhaigou.

Be careful while taking pictures on mountain trails.



# **Shuzheng Lakes**

To the right of Shuzheng Lakes

It is possible to take good pictures in all seasons of the year, but spring and autumn are best.

Around 9:30 am in late March

f/45 aperture, and 1 second shutter (plus polariser and Fuji RDP III reversal film)

Linhof Master Technika 2000 4x5 field camera, 250 mm lens

Three 4x5 pictures linked together

Note the slippery ground on snowy days. Take care of your cameras.



# **Rhino Lake**

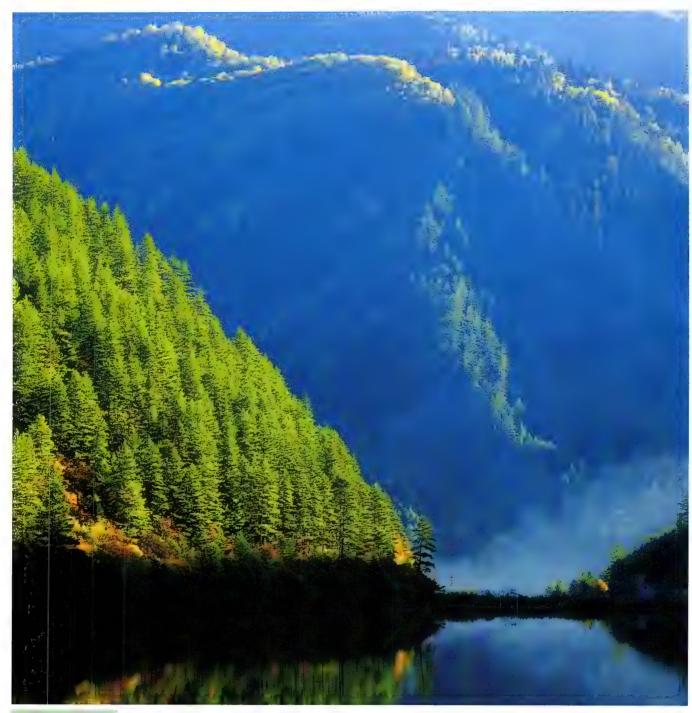
On the roadside to the right of Rhino Lake

Around 10:30 am in late October

f/45 aperture, and 1/4 second shutter (plus polariser and Kodak EPP reversal film)

Linhof Technorama 612 PC, 150 mm lens

It is best to shoot in the morning. Rhino Lake is calm before 10 am. The side backlight is good for reflecting the physical textures of the reeds and the red leaves.



# **Mirror Lake**

cocation On the roadside to the left of Mirror Lake

Best season. Autumn

Time. Around 8:30 am

Skills: f/22 aperture, and 1/8 second shutter (plus polariser and Kodak EPP reversal film)

Camera: Hasselblad 202 camera, 40 mm lens

Tie: The light on an autumn morning is strong. Pay attention to the exposure. Normally slight underexposure is good.

Remission Mirror Lake is one of the scenic spots in Jiuzhaigou that are exposed to light early. In the early morning, the lake is still. It is perfect for shooting the reflections on the lake surface.

# **Nuorilang Waterfall**

The upper right-hand side of Nuorilang Waterfall

Best season: Summer, autumn and winter are good seasons, while winter gives a special quality to the pictures.

Time: Around 8:40 am in early February

Skils: f/45 aperture, and 1/4 second shutter (plus polariser and Fuji RDP III reversal film)

Camera: Linhof Master Technika 2000 4x5 field camera, 72 mm lens

Typ: In winter, Nuorilang Waterfall is subject to backlight. Try to avoid flare. Reminder: When the early morning sun is shining on the waterfall, is the

best time to take pictures. Seize the moment.



# Picture-taking Precautions in Jiuzhaigou:

O Suggested itinerary: It is possible to take pictures at all regular sites in Jiuzhaigou in one day, but the time would be pressing. It is suggested to stay for two or three days. Transportation within the valley is chiefly walking and from time to time, the environment-friendly tourist bus. Of all three valleys, walking is not an option for Zechowagou as its scenic spots are few and widely distributed. In the case of a summer visit, only Long Lake and Five-colour Pond are open to tourists. Taking a tourist bus will save a lot of time.

Mirror Lake (by tourist bus in early morning) - the section with Pearl Shoal Waterfall, Pearl Shoal, Five-flower Lake, Panda Lake and Arrow Bamboo Lake (quick walk to avoid crowds; if time does not permit, choose between Panda Lake and Arrow Bamboo Lake) - primitive forest (tourist bus) - Nuorilang Tourist Centre (tourist bus; lunch) - Nuorilang Waterfall (best to take pictures in the afternoon) - Long Lake (tourist bus) - Five-colour Pond (walking) - Shuzheng Lakes (tourist bus) - Reed Lake (tourist bus; note: to capture the best moments at sunset)

### ▼ Two-day itinerary:

1) Mirror Lake (tourist bus in the early morning) - the section with Pearl Shoal Waterfall, Pearl Shoal, Five-flower Lake, Panda Lake and Arrow Bamboo Lake (quick walk to avoid crowds) - primitive forest (tourist bus) - Grass Lake and Swan Lake (walking) - Nuorilang Tourist Centre (tourist bus; lunch) -Nuorilang Waterfall (best to take pictures in the afternoon)

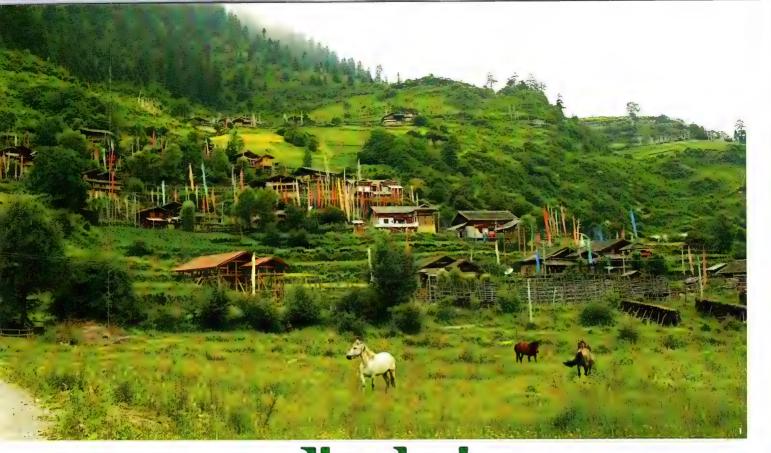
2) Bonsai Shoal - Reed Lake - Spark Lake (start walking from the entrance of the valley) - Shuzheng Waterfall (tourist bus) - Shuzheng Lakes - Tiger Lake - Rhino Lake (walking) - Nuorilang Tourist Centre (funch) - Long Lake (tourist bus) - Five-colour Pond (walking) - take a tourist bus to capture a different angle of Shuzhenggou Scenic Zone covered in the morning

### Tips about sunshine:

Time-wise, it is comparatively easy to take pictures in Jiuzhaigou. In other places, photographers have to get up early and go home late. The sun rises late in Jiuzhaigou. With mountains on both sides of the valley, the sun will have risen for some time before it can be seen inside the valley. The sun sets early in Jiuzhaigou. Normally the sun can be seen at 9 am and sets at 4:30 pm. The hours of sunshine in the day are few and the sun is always shining at an angle. What we usually term 'noontime light' is not obvious in Jiuzhaigou, it is possible to take good pictures at noon, however, sunrise and sunset are better still.

### O Apparatus:

- 17-35 mm wide-angle lens, 80-200 mm long focus lens and close-up lens
- Reversal film RVP or 100VS
- A polariser is required to sharpen the colours of the blue sky and the autumn leaves and filter the light on the water's surface. 81A or 81B filter - As there is no low colour temperature in Jiuzhaigou, a filter helps to reduce the colour temperature.
- A tripod is a must.



# Hanging Around Jiuzhaigou

Photos & Article by Mickey Ching

It would be a mistake to think that you've 'done' Jiuzhaigou after sightseeing inside the valleys. There are still plenty of other nearby scenic spots that are worth visiting: Zhongchagou known as the 'backyard of Jiuzhaigou'; Goddess Pond (Shenxianchi), a mini-version of Jiuzhaigou and Huanglong; Jarpo, an ancient city with typical Tibetan and Qiang ethnic villas; Jiuzhai Paradise, a five-star plus luxury hotel. A visit to some of these spots will certainly add interest to your trip to Jiuzhaigou.

Zhongchagou

Switchbacking up the mountain road of Zhangzha Town near Jiuzhaigou and climbing over a slope, I saw a different world stretching out over a wide expanse of land. Wild flowers dotted the meadows in front of the villages. A few ponies were trotting over the fields. What a heavenly retreat! Zhongchagou is located at the intersection of Jiuzhai Paradise, a five-star hotel, and the Jiuzhaigou Scenic Zone.

There were no other tourists on the day I visited. I was told that one could reach Mirror Lake and Pearl Shoal by climbing over the mountain. Compared with the boisterous, overly crowded Jiuzhaigou Scenic Zone, the tranquility here was pure luxury. I picked a village at random and walked up to a family. The old man, host of the family, made a bowl of rich, fragrant butter tea for me, with boiled potato served with chili pepper oil. The brimming bowl of butter tea was spread on top with peanut, walnut pieces and naizha (dried milk pieces after the butter is separated). I used the coarse wooden chopsticks to stir the butter tea,

which had a light scent of butter. I decided to throw away all my instant butter tea bags at home after this bowl of authentic butter tea.

There are plans for Zhongchagou to open to the general public soon, with such facilities as an outdoor performance ground, horse riding site, country pub, cultural street, natural skiing site and a sightseeing cable car. So if you want to experience Zhongchagou in its primitive state, you need to set off now...

Transportation: There are no shuttle tourist buses at the moment. A round-trip rental car costs 200 yuan.

Ticket: Free

# **Goddess Pond (Shenxianchi)**

Jiuzhaigou and Huanglong are twins that always stick together. In fact, a nearby place called Goddess Pond (Shenxianchi) has the crossover scenery of both. Legend has it that Goddess Pond was the place where fairies bathed. It is the only primitive forest in the Jiuzhaigou area that has never been logged. It is covered with layers of yellow and white calcium, which forms a string of bowl-like calcified ponds and

dips in peculiar shapes. Goddess Pond is dubbed a 'mini combination' of Jiuzhaigou and Huanglong.

The tourist bus of the scenic zone will first take you to the 28 bends viewing deck. It will then go to the tourist centre where you can have a buffet lunch. After lunch, you can spend some time enjoying the scenic spots. A wood-plank trail connects Water Curtain Cave (Shuiliandong), Gold and Silver Shoal (linyintan), Deity Spring (Shenguan) and Yao Lake (the abode of the fairy mother goddess). A round trip takes over one hour. The ticket, priced at 277 yuan, covers the tourist bus, lunch and all other costs.

Address: Dalu Township, Jiuzhaigou County

Transportation: Rent a car from Jiuzhaigou Scenic Zone at 100 yuan for a round trip. It takes about half an hour to cover the major scenic spots on foot. Alternatively, you can hire a sedan chair to save the trouble of walking, at a cost of 260 yuan.

Ticket: 277 yuan



**Experience of Qiang Folk Jarpo Ancient City** 

Jarpo means 'king' in Tibetan. The ancient city was the encampment of the troops of Srongsten Gampo (615 - 650) when he headed east to conquer Tang (618 - 907). Today local authorities have tried to restore the ancient city to its original state. Inside the ancient city is the villa district for tourists. The external walls of the villas are rendered with local rocks, evoking the lost life of the streets, houses, shops and temples of about one and a half millenniums ago. To gain an understanding of the culture and arts of the Tibetan and Qiang ethnic groups, visit the Tibetan and Qiang Cultural Museum, folk commodity street, restaurants and bars inside. Particularly, the enormous Jiuzhai Paradise Opera House, a majestic place, is worth a visit; it can accommodate 2,000 people. Every day, a large show entitled Jiuzhai Paradise: A Fantasy Trip is staged. After the show, the curtains on the centre stage are lifted gradually to merge the stage with the bonfire square. In such an open space, over 10,000 people can watch open-air performances and together dance Guozhuang, a kind of Tibetan group dance. It promises a night full of fun and

Address: Near Ganhaizi Scenic Zone, Jiuzhaigou

Transportation: Take a taxi from Jiuzhaigou Scenic Zone at 20 yuan



# An Extraordinary Jiuzhaigou Jiuzhai Paradise

Ticket: Free

A lot of people misunderstand what is meant by Jiuzhai Paradise, believing it to be inside the Jiuzhaigou Scenic Zone. In fact, it is a super luxury hotel and carefree retreat quite far from the scenic zone. Many visitors to Jiuzhaigou go to relax as well as enjoy the natural beauty. The hotel can meet such expectations. It offers rooms that naturally fuse postmodern architectural style and typical Tibetan and Qiang characteristics; a hot spring waterfall and pond 150 m long, 65 m wide; a café and tea corridor that resembles a 'hanging garden'... Without leaving the premises of the hotel, you can have a relaxing long vacation here. It is about a 10-minute drive from the Ganhaizi Scenic Zone, where you can enjoy such activities as rafting and horse riding.

Address: Ganhaizi, Zhangzha Town, Jiuzhaigou

Transportation: Rent a car from the Jiuzhaigou Scenic Zone at about 50 yuan



1. Staying in Zhongchagou, I feel like I am in an idyllic niche free of care and conflict.

2. Goddess Pond has the crossover qualities of Jivzhaigov and Huanglong.

3. Jarpo ancient city constructed in the Tibetan and Qiang architectural

4. The super luxury hotel Jiuzhai Paradise.



# **Entrance of the Valley**

If you want to avoid the haggling games at the souvenir stalls inside the Jiuzhaigou Scenic Zone, you still have another choice — the night market at the entrance of the scenic zone. The night market is in fact a shopping street of about 2 km, lined with 40 to 50 shops on both sides. The shops have a wide array of goods, including butter tea, pouches with shoulder strings, Qiang-style embroidery, Tibetan-style shawls, CDs, accessories, caps and hats. The price is just half of those at the Folk Culture Village inside the scenic zone and Bianbian Street. For example, a Tibetan-style shawl is sold in Bianbian Street at 20 to 30 yuan. In the night market, it is offered at 10 yuan! I suggest you inquire about prices at different places before you make a decision.

### Bianbian Street in Tibetan culture

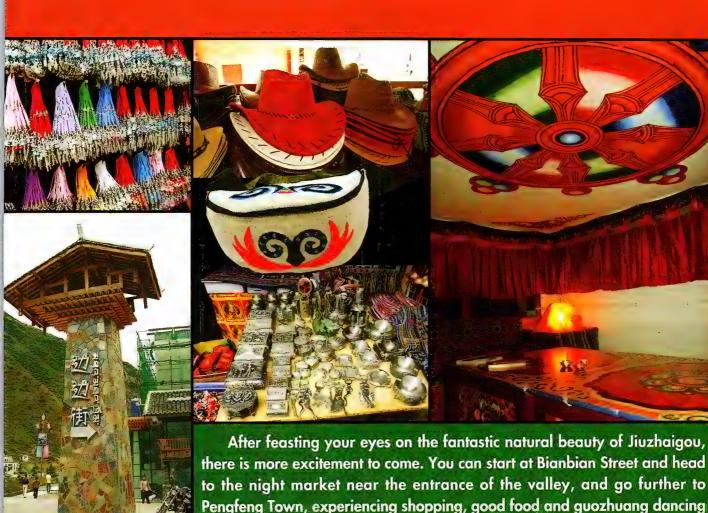
About 1 km from the entrance of the scenic zone, Bianbian Street began serving tourists in 2005. Compared with the commercial streets in other ancient cities in China, Bianbian Street has a distinctly Tibetan feeling. At 8 pm sharp, the noisy, energetic guozhuang dancing is held in the open space outside the Jiuzhaigou MAC Village International Hotel. A group of Tibetans will lead you in dancing guozhuang, experiencing in person the excitement of Tibetan dance. Plus, it is all free!

### **Authentic Tibetan food**

Drokpa, meaning 'nomad' in Tibetan, is a Tibetan restaurant run by Drolma, her mother and brother. They were nomads in Ngari before they migrated to Jiuzhaigau.

Drokpa is different from other Tibetan restaurants. Drolma was sad that people referred to Tibetan cuisine as awful food. So she made up her mind to serve the best Tibetan delicacies to tourists. Potato, yogurt, yak beef cake... All are 100% made from spices and ingredients from Ngari. On top of all the great food, Drokpa makes visitors feel very welcome in her restaurant.







# **Pengfeng Town**

Dance Like a King!

Before entering the Tibetan King Banquet Dance site, each visitor will be presented with hada (or Khatag), a long strip of white silk to show respect, and qingke (Tibetan barley) wine. At the beginning of the show, the 'Tibetan King' will invite the audience to drink together. The performers of the troupe are all young people. They add some modern elements to the famous Tibetan operas Jiuzhai Girls and Tibet in the Sky. The last and the best part of the performance includes the Tibetan tap dance and the group dance in

which the audience is invited onto the stage to join the hand-in-hand circle of dancers. This is definitely the climax of the show.

Tibetan Kina Banquet Dance

Address: Tibetan King Banquet Dance Art Centre

as well as take in some performances. All your senses will be stimulated.

Ticket: 180 yuan Performance time: 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm

Ticket office: Tibetan King Banquet Dance Art Centre in Pengfeng Town

Transportation: Once in Pengfeng Town, take a taxi to the art centre for 5 yuan.

### Snack Food in Pengfeng Town

After the show, it was still only 9:30 pm, so I took a stroll and found some ideal hangouts for gourmets in the town. Generally I do not patronise sidewalk food stalls. However, standing in front of these Tibetan and Qiang barbeque stalls with deliciously flaming heat, I could not say no. The barbequed kebabs included mutton,

yak beef, dumpling, squid, vegetable and horsebean... The selling point was that the stalls applied different home-made natural spices to spread generously on top of the kebabs. And the price? Just 5 yuan per stick. Don't

torture yourself — try some! Place: Pengfeng Town

Minimum charge: 0.5 yuan

Business hours: 6:00 pm to 2:00 am

Transportation: Take a taxi from the entrance of the Juzhaigou Scenic Zone to Pengfeng Town for 5 yuan. Or







# Place: Performance site of Tiberan King

The popular saying that 'any Tibetan with feet can dance and any Tibetan with a mouth can sing' is absolutely true. I think the saying should also include: 'all Tibetan men are handsome and Tibetan women are beautiful'. When I pointed the camera at them, they instinctively gave their best poses. When I asked whether they had thought about making their own independent development elsewhere, they replied: 'Jiuzhaigou has everything. We cannot leave everything behind!"

Met Them...



### **Three Cousins**

### A small shop in Bianbian Street

Prayer wheels are ubiquitous in the streets and lanes of Jiuzhaigou. Even the children in shop each held a prayer wheel. Combined with the peace and safety that brings with a pi wheel (sold at 8 yuan), the innocent and sunny smiles of the kids are a great memory to with you on the road.

### Yang Huoxiu Green-vested Cleaner Place: Spare Laboration

Jiuzhaigou has remained unpolluted by tourism over the years. This can be put down to the measures to protect the environment of the scenic zone. Of all the people who contribute to keeping the zone pollution-free, the cleaners can take most credit. They stick to their posts and work hard to achieve that end.

Ms. Yang Huoxiu works at Spark Lake of Jiuzhaigou. She admits she had little schooling, but she feels nothing is more important than the protection of Jiuzhaigou. She starts work at damage by tourists. The last thing she wants to planks to play in the lake or shoal. If only more people were as dedicated in their efforts as her, Jiuzhoigou would be truly safe from environmental harm. She deserves our two



# **Drolma and Her Mother**

Place: Under reflection of the Objective

It was a karmic encounter with Drolma and her family. I was originally headed for a restaurant near Drokpa when I met Drolma. We nodded to each other, but then our conversation went on. I could not understand what her mother said as she spoke Tibetan. We communicated by using hand gestures. She asked me whether I was hungry by rubbing her the belly, and invited me to drink butter tea by holding the bowl and toasting. As a line by the Tang poet Bai Juyi (772 - 846) goes, 'Told even more in silence than they had told in sound...



### **Bravo Costume Lady** Place: I = 19 Intro

Jiuzhaigou literally means 'Nine-Village Valley'. I was determined to

find Tibetans who lived inside the valley, so I could experience the authentic cultural existence in addition to the natural formations. In the end, I found

that I did not need to search for such people. They constantly appeared out

She was once a cleaner inside Jiuzhaigou Scenic Zone. Now she has turned her talents to costume rental. In the early morning every day, she takes a bus to Long Lake and solicits business. She would only call it a day at 3 or 4 pm in the afternoon. This lady was there every day, come rain, hail or shine. At noontime when the highland sun was scorching, the auntie had a lovely smile on her face, offering unofficial statistics, Jiuzhaigou receives 10,000 visitors a day. Even faced with such a big crowd, she was a true professional. Bravo!



# Mr. Li, a Living Dictionary of Jiuzhaig **Inquiry counter in Nuorilang Tourist Centre**

'Where are you goin'?'

It was Cantonese! Had I met a fellow countryman from Guangdong?

In fact, Mr Li was from Tianjin in northern China. As he had worked in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, he had learned to speak Cantonese. Tired of the fast life in Shenzhen, he travelled to Sichuan. He was attracted by the beautiful landscape in Sichuan and ended up working in Jiuzhaigou. Now his main responsibility is to answer tourists inquiries at the Nuorilang Tourist Centre.

What are the earliest and latest tourist buses to Long Lake? Where is the nearest tailet? Sichuanese, Cantonese, authentic Mandarin... he could speak them all.

Translated by Barry Zhang

# How to get to Jiuzhaigou









### **Transportation**

### O By gir:

There are direct flights to Chengdu from both Hong Kong and Shenzhen. In Chengdu, you can transit at the Jiuhuang Airport 83 km from Jiuzhaigou. In the high season there are flights to Jiuhuang Airport each day. The fare ranges from 600 to 1,200 yuan. The flying time is about 40 minutes.

### O By bus:

### Jiuhuang Airport to Jiuzhaigou

Taxis and an airport shuttle bus are available between Huanglong / Jiuzhaigou and Jiuhuang Airport. The cost of taking a taxi to the scenic zone is about 200 yuan. Taking an airport shuttle bus is convenient. Airport to Jiuzhaigou (88 km) one-way: 45 yuan (about 1.5 hours)

Airport to Huanglong (43 km) one-way: 22 yuan (about 1 hour)

### Chengdu to Jiuzhaigou and back to Chengdu

- It is best to buy long-distance bus tickets from Chengdu to Jiuzhaigou one day in advance. Normally two buses leave for Jiuzhaigou, one at 7:30 am and one at 7:45 am from the Xinnanmen Bus Terminal (near Jiaotong Hotel). They will arrive at Jiuzhaigou at about 8 pm. The fare is 120 yuan.

Tel.: (28) 8543 3609

- Long-distance buses leave from Chengdu Chadianzi Bus Terminal at 8:40 am. Tel.: (28) 8750 6610
- There is a bus centre near Jiutong Hotel in Bianbian Street in Jiuzhaigou, where buses leave for Chengdu, Songpan, Huanglong, Dujiangyan and other provinces and counties. Business hours in winter and spring: 6 am ~ 6:30 pm; business hours in summer and autumn: 5:40 am ~ 8 pm.

Buses to Chengdu are available at 6:20, 7, 8 am and 1 pm. The bus that set off at 8 am can reach Chengdu at 9 pm the same day. The fare plus insurance is 120 yuan. Currently the highway to Chengdu is being renovated. There is a chance you could get stuck in a traffic jam. So take a bus only when you have plenty of time.

### ○ Transportation inside Jiuzhaigou Scenic Zone:

Taxis to the nearby Bianbian Street, Pengfeng Town and Zhangzha Town are available inside the valley. Like taxis in other places, the fare is based on distance. The starting price is 5 yuan. If you take a taxi to Jiuzhai Paradise, Goddess Pond or other far-off scenic zones, you can bargain with the taxi driver.

### Information for Jiuzhaigou Sightseeing

- © Entrance Fee: low season 80 yuan / person; high season 220 yuan/person.
- O Tourist sightseeing bus ticket: low season (16 Nov ~ 31 Mar), 80 yuan / person; high season (1 Apr ~ 15 Nov), 90 yuan.
- Opening time: 8 am ~ 6 pm at low season; 7am ~ 7 pm at high season

The tourist sightseeing bus service in Jiuzhaigou in both high and low seasons, runs according to the times the tickets are sold and the number of tickets sold. So the number of trips will be adjusted according to the number of tourists in the valley and their requirements. Basically, most of the scenic spots in the valley have bus stops, with clear signs.

- OSightseeing on foot: Jiuzhaigou's main scenic spots are distributed throughout three valleys — Shuzheng, Rize and Zechawa, in a 'Y' shape. The distances between some of the scenic spots are as follows: entrance of Jiuzhaigou to Nuorilang, about 14.5 km; Nuorilang to Long Lake and Fivecolour Pond, 18 km; Nuorilana to primitive forest, 18 km. Roughly, you can comfortably complete the sightseeing in one valley a day.
- ODining: In the whole of the scenic zone, only the Nuorilang Tourist Centre provides a dining service. It can accommodate 3,000 people. The business

hours are 10:30 am to 4 pm.

⊙ Tips for personal safety: As Jiuzhaigou is on the highlands, it is not wise to engage in highly demanding physical exercise. You should also avoid drinking wine. Tea, water, fruit, chocolate and other high-calorie food are helpful to reduce altitude sickness.

### © Environment protection:

- All waste should be sorted and thrown into the environment protection rubbish bins. The maximum fine for littering is 500 yuan.
- Smoking and lighting fires are banned inside the valley. Do not bring inflammable and explosive substances into the valley.
- Entering the lakes or playing on the shoals is not allowed. Do not throw rubbish into the lakes.
- Do not walk on the edges of the wooden trails and look out for stones rolling down the mountain slope while you walk on the trail.

### Accommodations

No accommodation is available inside the valley. There are hostels and hotels of various star grades at the entrance of the valley and along the highways to Pengfeng and Zhangzha towns.

### O Lotus Leaf Hotel

Address: Entrance of the Jiuzhaigou Scenic Zone Tel.: (837) 773 5555 Rate: standard room at 880 yuan (discount possible)

\* It is the nearest hotel to the scenic zone. It is convenient to start from the hotel to visit the scenic zone, Bianbian Street and Penafena Town.

### O Paradesa Jiuzhaigou Resort

Address: Head of Bianbian Street Tel.: (28) 8510 9937

Rate: standard room at 1,080 yuan (low season 860 yuan); single room at 1,280 yuan

\* Near 5-star hotel in the Jiuzhaigou Scenic Zone area, and one of the four terrestrial heat environment-friendly hotels in the world.

### O Sheraton Jiuzhaigou International Hotel

Address: Jiuzhaigou Scenic Zone Tel.: (837) 773 9988

Rate: standard room at 1,200 yuan

\* Five-star hotel, with a great environment and well-equipped. The Sheraton Theatre stages perform exciting shows.

### O Jiuly Holiday Hotel

Address: Entrance of Jiuzhaigou Scenic Zone Tel.: (837) 773 9939

Rate: standard room at 680 yuan

\* The hotel is only 200 m away from the entrance to Jiuzhaigou Scenic Zone. It provides over 150 rooms.

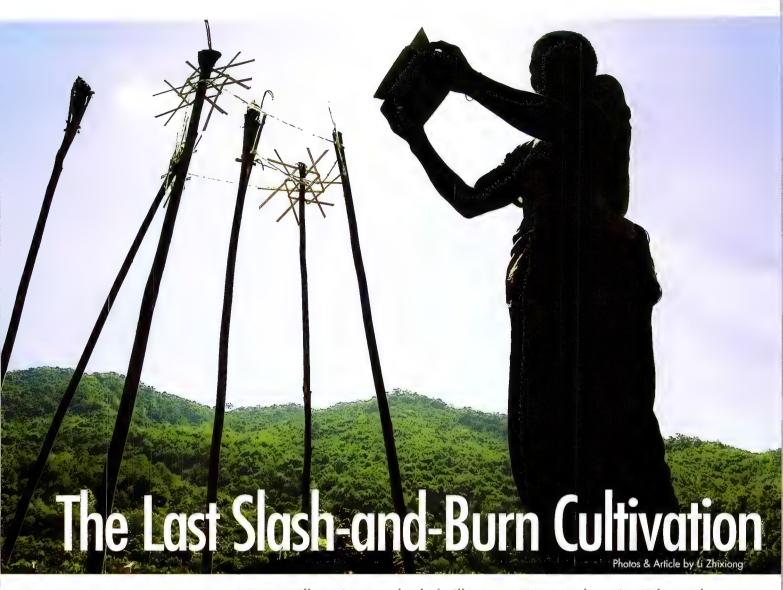
### O Jiuzhaigou MAC Village International Hotel

Address: No. 10, Bianbian Street Tel.: (837) 773 4361

Rate: Single room at 388 yuan and standard room at 468 yuan (50% discount possible in low season)

\* Near 3-star hotel in Bianbian Street, with a good environment.





Xinnan village is a stockaded village on Mount Bulang in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan Province, less than two kilometres from Myanmar. Slash-and-burn (shifting) cultivation has been practiced here for generations, and a plot of land will be left fallow for seven or eight years after a single harvest. Before reclamation, the villagers pray and make offerings to spirits and deities, and resort to the farmer's almanac and numerology. However, after this round of farming, the villagers will adapt to growing Pu'erh tea, and the slash-and-burn cultivation practiced by the mountain tribes will be terminated.

Xinnan village is a reclusive natural village in Bulang, Menghai County. It was said to be a place still practicing the slash-and-burn cultivation, so we drove there by asking direction along the way. Our jeep bounced left and right as if we were moving on a trampoline. As the car dashed out of the forest, we caught sight of several burned and bare round hilltops, and heard singing in the distance. A crowd of people was slowly coming out of the valley opposite; they were the Bulang tribe of

Xinnan village, who were returning home after the sowing the fields.

### Fallow for Seven Years after Harvest

We joined the crowd entering Xinnan village. Not large in size, the village was fenced and had thatched cottages scattered on a hillside. It was new village spawned from the old Chae Village several years ago. Less than two kilometres from Myanmar, it consisted of 56 households, with a





population of 236. All the villagers were from the Bulang tribe and followed Theravada Buddhism.

The old man exclusively responsible for worship and augury practices in the village was Yan Benjiao, who was also known by the term for his profession, priest. The priest was choosing dates and chanting prayers (predicting a lucky time for sowing) when we arrived. Finding that we were interested in their way of farming, he recited a passage from a torn and yellowish sutra carried with him everywhere. Then he told us the stories about the slash-and-burn cultivation of the Bulang tribe.

Most farmlands of the Xinnan village were located on steep slopes between 1,200 m and 1,500 m altitudes, and only hardy crops, such as dry rice, grain sorghum, corns and buckwheat could grow there. The slash-and-burn cultivation practiced

there followed a natural fallow system instead of rotation, that is a farmland would be left fallow for seven or eight years after a harvest. The villagers did not reforest the fallow fields but simply left the vegetation grew naturally. There were seven farmer's fields in Xinnan village, and each of them was farmed once every seven years.

### **Numerous Ceremonial Taboos for Farming**

In addition to Theravada Buddhism, the Bulang tribe also advocates primitive religions, believing in a variety of spirits and gods. They assumed that spirits and gods, some of whom are responsible for natural phenomena, farming affairs, crops and livestock, and wealth, dominated all matters. Priest remarked that none of these spirits or gods should be offended.

Farming ceremonies began in January. For first

- In the field, Priest Yan Benjiao prays for the spirits and deities to bless a harvest.
- 2. Several young monks play drums by the roadside, with the sound resonating in the valleys.
- 3. Before sowing a pig is prepared for the worshipping of deities in the field
- 4. As a new village spawned from the old village Chae Village years ago, Xinnan village is less than 2km from Myanmar.





thing the priest had to do was finding out which field was scheduled for cultivation that year, and then he would come to a temple in the village, and lead the villagers to pray and make offering to the spirits and gods, as well as consult the almanac. After that, all the households would go out to slash trees on the field to be farmed. When the villagers rid the field of the trees, they followed the principle of simply cutting off the branches of the big trees for burning, rather than totally logging them. In this way, the trunks were left to grow again. In Xishuangbanna, the land is fertile and the rainfall is abundant, so the burnt stump will start to sprout after several rains. In February, Xinnan villagers set up a fire belt by digging a wide pitch between the in-use farmland and the state-owned forests. And in March, rites would be held in the temple, usually with dried fish and eggs as offerings to the spirits and deities. Priest Yan Benjiao would pick a proper date to burn the land, and all the village workers would have to join, keeping the fire from spreading out to the wooded areas. In April, the villagers would tidy and clear the burnt lands. May was the busiest time for the priest throughout the year. Apart from farming the land of his own household, he also had to calculate and adapt auspicious dates and times to sow for every other family, by going out to perform a rain ceremony in the field, chanting a sutra and praying for the harvest of their crops.

### Stately Ceremony for a Harvest

After sowing, the large-scaled farming work in the village temporarily came to an end, and young people would go and find jobs in the Mount Bulang Township seat or the Menghai County seat. Middle-aged men stay in the village to set up huts and keep their crops from being destroyed by wild







boars and other animals. Late September was the time to reap the crops, and those people working out of town would all come home.

Before harvest, Priest Yan Benjiao would chant sutra passages, pray at the fields, and make thanksgiving offerings to the deities and spirits. It was a great event to move the grains into granaries in the Xinnan village. On that occasion, Priest Yan Benjiao would perform a ceremony to summon the spirit of the grains, and cast peace and prosperity over the whole village. By then, the major agrarian activities would be considered as complete, and the villagers would prepare a meal with new rice and chicken and duck dishes to celebrate with relatives and friends.

### A Concerted Neat Sowing Ceremony

In the early morning, the whole Xinnan village was immersed in a thin haze. Today, two households were going to sow, and one of them was Yan Jiaojiang's family. Having specially prepared a 37.5 kg pig and 20 kg rice, this family had asked 20 couples to give a hand with the sowing, about half the population of the village.

Yan Jiaojiang's land is on a gentle slope, beyond which the territory of Myanmar begins. The sowing began from the bottom of the valley. Men and women stood in a line, with men using sharp iron triangular shovels mounted on a long stick to dig small pits in the earth, and women dropped the seeds into the pits. Some small copper bells were tied on the sticks, so whenever the sticks moved the bells rang with clear and melodious sound; everyone's motion is in harmony, as if they were performing a simple piece of music. People were moving from left to right at first, and then from right to left up a row when they had finished the previous one. In this way, they moved up to the top of the mountain, with the soil brought up by the shovels above covering the small pits filled with seeds a row below.

### The Final Fate of Slash-and-Burn Cultivation

People had their lunch in the field after the ceremony, and the priest sat nearby smoking and looking sad. A village head told us this was the last time for Yan Benjiao to act as the priest for sowing. After this round of farming, all the households in Xinnan village will move out of this forest and return their seven plots of farmlands to forestation, and they will grow Pu'erh tea instead of crops like their neighbour Zhanajia Village does. After growing tea, many households in the Zhangjia Village could afford to buy tractors, motorbikes and cars. According to Yan Xiangang, secretary of Zhangjia Village, giving up the slash-and-burn cultivation and utilising the particular geographical advantages and natural conditions on Mount Bulang to grow economically valuable crops, is the only way for the Bulang tribe to completely shake off poverty. All the villagers in the Xinnan village are looking forward to this day, as they know that the tea from Mount Bulang sells very well in Menghai, and that the prices for Pu'erh teas increases every year. Therefore, Yan Benjiao will resign his position after this round of farming, as these types of ceremonies for ancient style slash-and-burn cultivation are inapplicable to tea planting.

Translated by Huang Deyuan

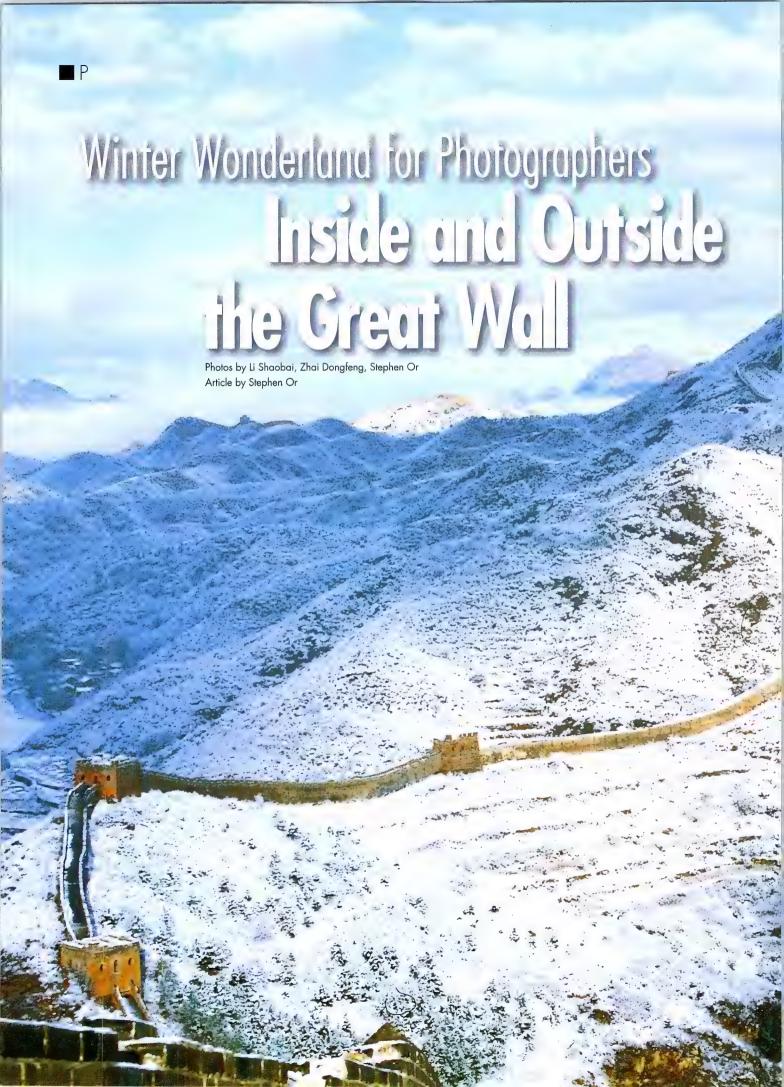
- 1. Kids having their lunch at the end of a field.
- 2. Usually two people worked together sowing the land, with one an iron triangular shovel mounted on a long stick to dig a small pit and the other dropping the prepared seeds into the hole.
- 3. The villagers are preparing food for the sowing work.
- 4. A stream behind the Xinnan Village is where villagers' daily water supply.

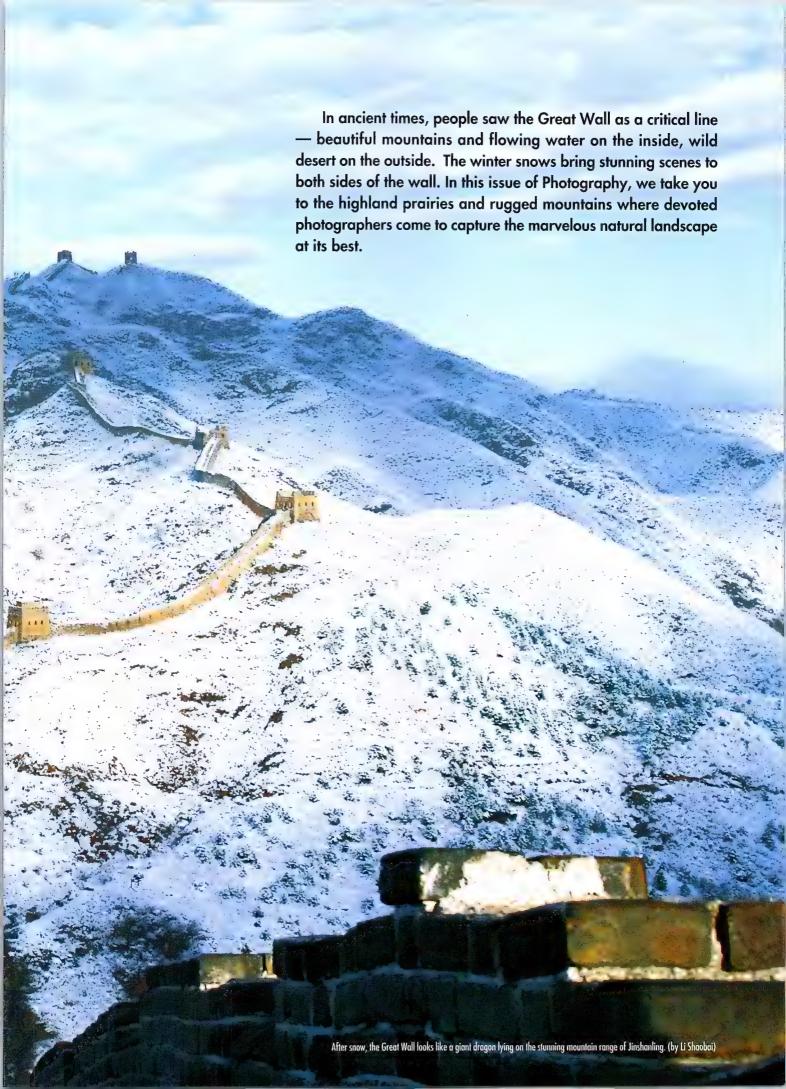


### Travel Tips

Transport: A dozen regular flights are available from Kunming to Xishuangbanna in Yunnan Province every day. And in Xishuangbanna, there are many regular buses each day from Jinghong City to the Menghai County seat. At the county seat bus station, travellers can change to a regular bus to Mount Bulang Township, but should tell the driver to stop at the byroad leading to the Zhangjia Village. And then, you can reach the Zhangjia Village on foot or get a lift on any local motorbike that comes by. Starting Time: In Xishuangbanna, a year consists of dry and rainy seasons. It is suggested to go to Mount Bulang in the dry season (from the last ten days of October to the coming April).

Accommodation: Generally, neither accommodation nor board is a problem at Mount Bulang. It is advisable, however, to take your own sleeping bag and some candies for the kids. And a visitor who brings a couple bottles of alcohol to drink with the local people, will definitely hear many funny stories.





### • Khaskatun Qi



Inside & Outside the Great Wall

Itinerary:

**D1** Morning flight from Hong Kong to Beijing. After lunch, set out to Jinshanling to shoot the sunset. Accommodation: hotel at Jinshanling.

**D2** Morning and afternoon: photo shooting at the Jinshanling section of the Great Wall. After lunch, leave for Chenade. Capture images of the Imperial Summer Resort, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

**D3** Morning: Climb Hongshan to photograph sunrise on the snow-capped prairie and cooking smoke rising from the villages. Spend the day at the Huamu (birch) Forest Farm and Hama Ba (Toad Dam). Accommodation: hotel at Bashang.

**D4** Early morning. 6 am Be at Lamashan to shoot the sunrise. San Guaizi Gou is great for creative photography. Shoot white birch, streams and herds of sheep in the snow. In the afternoon, continue your photo jaunt at Yangshubei and Xiaohetou village. In the evening, capture the white birch forest under the light of the setting sun. Accommodation: hotel at Bashang.

D5 6 am Shoot the sunrise at Mulan Paddock (Weichang). Return to Beijing. Stay in Beijing overnight.D6 Morning: Shoot Beijing's quadrangle architecture. Flight back to Hong Kong at night.





# Jinshanling Section, the Great Wall

The Jinshanling section of the Great Wall is built on the mountain ranges of Yanshan, which is at the junction of Miyun county and Luanping county, 140 km north-east of Beijing. As this section is built on the Jinshan range between Wuling Mountain and Gubeikuo, and named Jishanling (Jinshan Summit). Jishanling is at an altitude of 700 m, with the wave-like mountain ranges to its north, the Simatai Reservoir, to its east and the Miyun Reservoir to its south. This section of the Great Wall is long and winding and it offers a panoramic view of the area. Its intensive series of watchtowers outshine the sections of wall at Badaling, Shanhaiguan and Jiayuguan. There is a saying that 'At Jinshan, the Great Wall stands out'.

### The Best Time for Shooting

The stunning mountain ranges of Jinshanling are suitable for photo shooting in all seasons. The flowers of spring, forests of summer, leaves of autumn and snows of winter all offer great opportunities for photographers. The Great Wall covered with white snow is certainly a draw.

Clothing: In winter, it is very cold and windy on the Great

Wall. If it snows, the temperature will be even lower. For details, please refer to the later section of this article.

Food: You can try the village cuisine at Hualougou (Flower Building gulley). Stewed chicken and stewed tofu with vegetables are highly recommended. These cost about 30 yuan per person.

Accommodation: Guest-houses can be found at the base of the mountain. A room for four costs about 15 yuan per person a night. Local inns costs about 30 to 40 yuan. Or stay with villagers in their houses at Hualuoguo, sleep on earthen furnace and experience the real country life. A night in village house cost about 15 yuan per person.

Transport: Jinshanling is situated in Luanping county, Chengde and it is next to the Beijing-Chengde Freeway, 130 km from Beijing and 91 km Chengde city. Take the long-distance coach at Dongzhimen station, Beijing to Miyun. Change to a minibus at Miyun to the tourist area of Jinshanling.

Caution: The roads of the Great Wall become wet and slippery after snows. You should watch your step. Don't walk while you are composing a frame in the viewfinder.

- 1. The winter snows give the collapsed west Jinshanling section of the Great Wall an even stronger sense of wilderness and solitude. (by Zhai Dong Feng)
- 2. The Simatai section of east Jinshanling lies along the rugged mountain range, giving it a stunning backdrop. (by Li Shaobai)

### **Prairie on Bashang**

Bashang is at the junction of Hebei Province and Inner Mongolia. In the Mongolian language it is called 'Saihanba', meaning 'Beautiful Highland'. It lies at the north of Weichang county, Hebei. It is also known as Mulan Paddock (Weichang). During the reigns of Kana Xi, Qian Long and lia Qing, the Emperor would take his generals to the area for hunting as — a semi-military exercise. The practice was called 'Mulan hunting'.

### The Best Time for Shooting

Bashang is great for photography in all seasons of

the year, but the most scenic are in autumn and winter. In late September, frost-capped white birch shimmers against the backdrop of white clouds and the blue sky. From late October onward, the strong icy air currents turn Bashana into a snow-covered fairyland.

The best times for shooting in the north are the short periods immediately after sunrise or before sunset. In sunny weather, it would be 7 am - 8 am and 3:30 - 5 am. The light is the most beautiful during these two periods. As the winter light shines on the snowy mountain, the wide spectrum of saturation and sharp colours help to create photos with greater detail.

Clothing: Bashang is at an average altitude of 1,500m. Spring and autumn are short, while winter is long and cold. The seasonal difference between the area and the inland is almost a month. In winter, the temperature is 10 degrees lower than Weichang and 20 degrees lower than Beijing. It is windy and chilly. You should have enough cold-weather clothes.

- 1. Your jacket should be handy, warmth-retaining and wind-proof. Down-filled sports clothes are the most suitable. You should also wear some woollen clothing to keep vourself warm. You'd also better wear sweat-free and air-penetrable thermal undergarments. Try not to wear ordinary cotton underwear as once you sweat, it will be very uncomfortable. Your trousers should be snua around the waist so as to prevent snow from slipping into your pants and shoes.
- 2. Wear medium to high-cut hiking shoes that are lightweight and water-proof. Wear thick sweat-free socks, ordinary socks would become wet after sweating and the sweat would cause heat loss from your feet. Enthusiastic photography hobbyists often stay outdoors for long hours and keeping their feet warm is especially important.
- 3. Caps, scarves and gloves are musts. Try to avoid exposing your skin to the cold air, especially your ears. They can suffer from frostbite easily.

Food: You can eat at your hotel and 3 meals a day costs about 30~40 yuan. Breakfast would usually be a Chinese bun, green bean congee and boiled eggs. Lunch and dinner would include rice, beef, mutton, beans and vegetables. For an extra price, you can also have braised mutton. Some say the mutton available here is the best.

Accommodation: In winter, almost all the guesthouses and hotels around Hongshan Horse Farm and Salhanba Forest Farm are closed. Photographers on self-tours should book their accommodation in advance. The temperature of Bashang at night can fall to -20 to -30 degrees Celsius and you should choose a hotel room with heating. Hotels that are open in winter include:

Wulanhade Hotel Tel: (0314) 780 5089 / 138 3148 6643

Zhangdahuzi Hotel Tel: (0314) 780 5098

### Transport:

Bus: Take the long-distance coach at Xizhimen, Beijing to the Weichang county. At Weichang, change for the mini-bus to Honashan Horse Farm.

Train: At the Beijing north station (Xizhimen Station), take train no. 557, which departs at 7:33 pm and arrives at Siheyong Station (Seat with bed - fare: 75 yuan). At Siheyona, take the mini-bus to Weichang county, then change for the 10 am bus to Honashan Horse Farm.

Car rental: Hire a 'Beijing 2020' series jeep at the Weichang county for about 400 yuan (driver and fuel included). During low season in winter, the rental fee should be slightly reduced. But you should try to hire an experienced driver as the road will be covered with snow and there are deep ditches on either side

that are easy to miss. Translated by Ezekiel Pana 1, 3&4. In winter, as well as the panoramic scenery, you can also take some great close-up photos, such as blades of grass on the icy land. In addition, you can also capture scenes at the herdsmen's farms. These two shivering donkeys were seen at the herdsmen's house where I stayed overnight. (by Stephen Or)







2. In winter, white snow scenes can be seen everywhere in Bashang. The mountains range with scattered white birches, cattle and sheep give the area the look of a delicate ink painting. (by Stephen Or)

### Winter Photography Tips\_

Photo equipment: In winter, the dazzling snow-flecked dam is gorgeous. A large or medium format camera is better for photo printing. To capture the panoramic scenery, it is best to use a telephoto lens, and sometimes a teleconverter could be mounted onto the telephoto lens. Wide-angle lenses can also be useful, but they are rarely needed.

### Keeping Your Photography Gear Freeze-proof

Generally speaking, electronic devices still work fine in winter, but batteries run out faster in low temperatures. An extra battery would be needed and it can be kept warm in the pocket of your clothes. If your first battery runs out, you can replace it with the extra one from your pocket. The first battery can then be put into your pocket to keep it warm. Wrap the grabs of a metal tripod with anti-freeze bands. Then your hands won't feel slippery or cold when you touch the grabs. Also, you should prevent your exposed skin from touching the metal parts of the tripod or your skin may stick to it due to the cold weather. When going from outdoors to indoors, don't take out your camera too quickly. Wait a while to avoid condensation. During shooting, you should also remember to keep your camera warm. Heat expansion and cold contraction can cause damage to your camera, especially digital cameras.

(They are composed of lots of electronic parts.) Buy a warm cover for your camera, which is available from any camera shop.

### Other points to note:

- In winter, the air is very dry in Bashang. On sunny days, the sunlight is very strong and the UV level is quite high. Items such as lip balm, skin cream and hand cream are essential for travel.
- On sunny days, the strong sunlight reflected by the snow can cause eye pain and temporary blindness. You'd better bring a pair of UV protection sunglasses with you.
- To keep up energy levels during your jaunt in the cold weather, you should also have some high-colorie food handy, like chocolate, beef jerky and biscuits.
- 4. On the way to the forestry form, you will pass through a man-made forest. At sunrise in winter, due to the temperature difference in the forest, the mist comes into contact with the cool tree branches, causing them to frost over, and create rime. But be quick if you want to catch this frosty spectacle, as the rime will evaporate as soon as the sun comes out.

# Wandering Around Domggiam Lake in Ningbo

1 otos & Article by Mickey Ching.

To sail a boat in the sunset, people usually think of the West Lake in Mesgabata. However, there is another ideal place in Zhejiang Province as well. Not only this surestimes larger than the West Lake, but also has been praised as having 'the momentum of the Lake Tai; the elegance of the West Lake' by Guo Moruo (a famous Chinese poet in the 20th century). There are also teahouses, Buddhist temples, a stone sculpture park and ancient villages by the lake, all created in a leisurely, graceful style. Where is such a heavenly place? It is the Dongqian Lake in Ningbo.



# Beautiful Lakeside Scenery

Basically, one can be fully relaxed and wander freely by the Dongqian Lake. Merely 15 km away from the Ningbo Lishe airport, we had already reached the Dongqian Lake scenic area before we could relish the scenery along the road. In the hills and by the water, all the buildings are constructed with red walls and green tiles, creating a resemblance to a water town in Jiangnan (Southern part of the Yanatze Delta). We found out later that they were holiday resorts in the scenic area, so no wonder they appeared in such harmony. The lake is known as the largest natural freshwater lake in Zhejiang Province. Being an uncrowned common tourist spot, its tranquility, which money cannot buy, is exciting enough.

In the Donagian Lake, taking a boat ride to enjoy the sunset is a must-do activity. A boatman took us around the Dongqian Lake for about an hour, and we saw fishermen heading out to fish from time to time. All the seafood available from the Dongqian Lake is known literally as 'Lake Fresh', mainly including shrimps, tench tails, luoshi (a

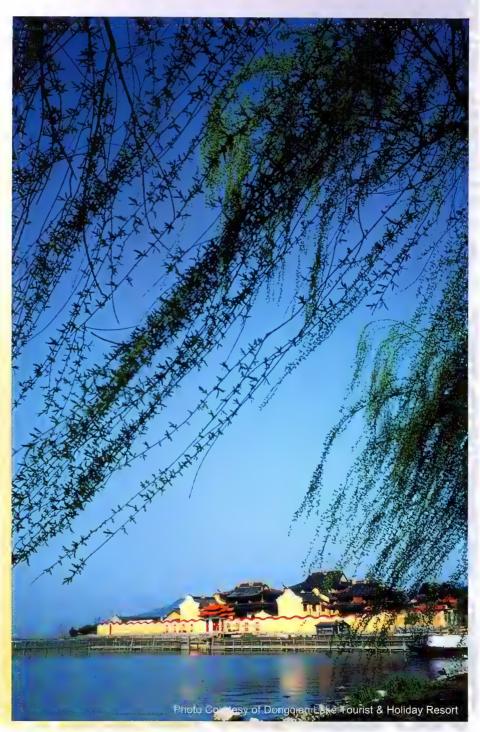
kind of snail) and soft-shelled turtles. They are prepared by steaming with soy sauce, boiling, cooking in soup or with rock sugar, in order to bring out the mild fresh seafood flavour, which is worthy of appreciation.

The scenic landmark of the Central Lake Area consists of a dam and Small Putuo temple area. The Central Lake Dam divides the lake into northern and southern parts. The Small Putuo scenic area, located on an island, is also known as Xiayu, where the Xiayu Temple, the Guanyin (Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara) Cave and the Wanghu Pavilion were built as early as the Southern Song Dynasty (1127 - 1279), bring some sense of Zen to the quiet Donggian lake.

Admission to Small Putuo: 30 yuan / person Transport: Get off at the final stop of bus No.901 (in the direction of the Central Lake Area)







# **EXCURSIONS**



# White Tea at Fuquan Hills

Located in the southeastern hills of the Dongqian Lake, the Fuquan Hills scenic area consists of undulating hills where the highest peak has an altitude of 556 m and there are 24 ha of endless tea plantations. Climbing up to the peak, one can have a panoramic view of the Dongqian Lake and the Ningbo urban area, and appreciate the beauty of both the lake and the hills. Although the Fuquan Hills have a mere 50-year history of tea plantations, it is the best place to grow White Tea due to its warm climate and abundant rainfall, and especially the irrigation from the Dongqian Lake, which is four times larger than the West Lake. White Tea is produced by slightly fermenting up to 10%-30% of the tea after picking, and then it is sun-dried or heat-dried directly without any other manual manipulation. This new star tea is not as famous as Longjing from Hangzhou; nevertheless do not ever belittle it. It is said that the grand Fuquan White Tea is priced at 24,000 yuan for a single kilogram! However, the tea set with a snack in Fuquan Dragon-pool Teahouse up the hills is only  $20\sim40$  yuan, which is ideally affordable.

Admission: 25 yuan / person

Fare of round trip tickets: 15 yuan / person

# **Gropping by Red Houses in Ancient Village**

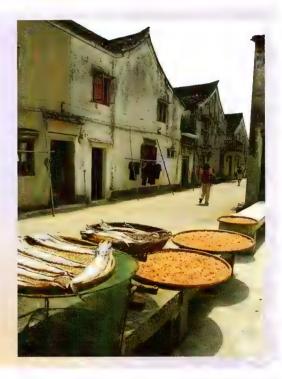
Although there are 18 villages to see by the Dongqian Lake, Hanling ancient village is the most impressive.

Known as 'the oldest street in East Zhejiang', the Hanling water village is located on the southern bank of the Dongqian Lake. People have resided here 744 B.C. Hanling had developed into a regular market opened every five days a week when the banks of the lake were reconstructed during the Northern Song Dynasty (960 – 1127). Moreover, Hanling had been an important connection for land and water transportation between the Ningbo urban area and the Xiangshan Port in the east, functioning like a water Silk Road. Therefore, it's no wonder that such a small village would be referred to a city then.

Nowadays, the village is filled with small red wooden houses, with slogans left hanging from the Cultural Revolution (1966 - 1976) period. There is a barbershop, mini-store and tayern, and residents do their laundry at the riverside, gossip with neighbours, and sewing, but it is hard to imagine this village thriving back in ancient times. Nevertheless, when it comes to 4:30 in the afternoon, small stalls set up at the entrance stimulate the atmosphere.

Admission: Free

Transport: Bus No.960, get off at Hanling stop



# Song Stone Sculptures

There are many scenic spots around the Dongqian Lake, and the Museum Stone Carvings of the South Song Dynasty is one of them. Most of China's stone or rock sculptures are usually related to either Buddhist grottos or imperial tombs; that of the Southern Song is an exception. Longing for returning to central plain, the emperor of the Southern Song did not leave any magnificent tomb carvings. Therefore, among the carvings by the Dongqian Lake, those in the tomb of a prime minister can be counted as the most complex, beautiful and well preserved.

These relics ringing by the Dongqian Lake are all beautifully styled and finely carved, with images such as officials, warriors, crouching tigers, horses and kneeling sheep, which reflect the social and historical appearance of the Southern Song Dynasty.

Admission: 30 yuan / person
Transport: Bus No.960

# Wisit to Fan Li, God of Fortune

The Donggian Lake is also called the Wanjin (literally means 'tremendous wealth') Lake related to Fan Li (a minister of the state of Yue during the Spring and Autumn Period, 722 - 481 B.C.) According to a legend, after Fan Li had assisted King Goujian to defeat his competitor from the state of Wu and scramble the hegemony successfully, he accompanied Xishi (one of the 'Four Beauties' in ancient China) to retreat to Funiu Hill and named himself Master Tao. As Fan Li was a very talented and successful businessman then, he became a magnate and was commemorated by his descendants as a god of fortune. The island where he and Xishi lived was known as Reverend Tao's Island, and the pond where he kept his money was named Wanjin Lake. Both places were touted as the 'shrine of fortune and love'. In the scenic area of the Reverend Tao's Island, there are the Temple of Reverend Tao, the Palace of Spring and Autumn, and the Hall of t<mark>he God of Fortune, as well as nine huge shoe-shaped gold ingots in front</mark> with a cartoon figure of the god of fortune Fan Li mounted on top. Tourists seeking good fortune often throw coins towards the ingots for luck. Do you also want to give it a shot and try your luck?

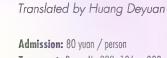
Admission: 10 yuan / person

Transport: Bus No.901, get off at Guogi Temple (in the direction of Central Lake Area)



# Goungor's Animal Planet

The Youngar Zoo may energise you and add a spring to your step, if you think rowing a boat, tea tasting and seafood are not exciting enough. Animals such as giraffes, African white lions, American flamingos, Northeast China white tigers, elephants, gibbons and camels, etc., populate this zoo. The excitement of coming so close to these animals while feeding them may make you sweat a little, but it could be the perfect ending to your Ningbo excursion.



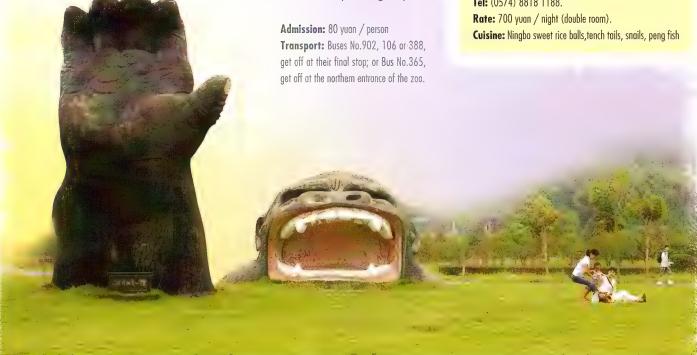
Address: Donggian Lake Tourist & Holiday Resort, Ningbo City, Zhejing Provinve

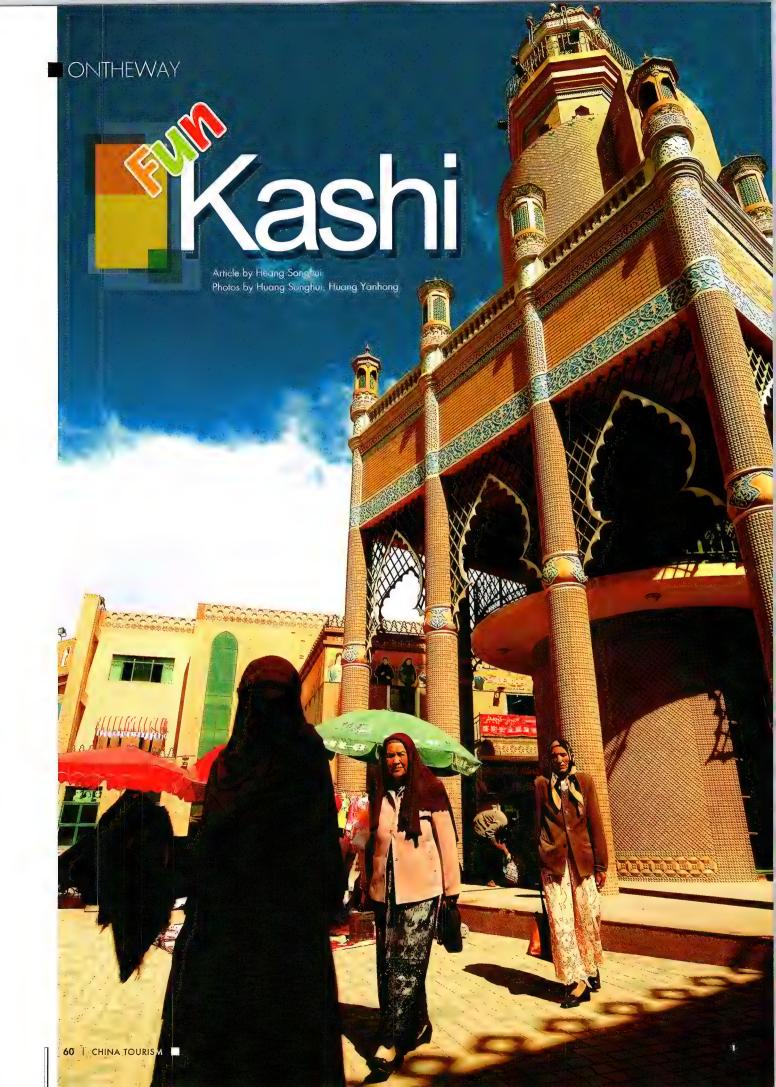
A Tour to the Donggian Lake

Transport: Direct tourist buses available at the Southern Station in Ningbo, buses at the Ningbo Eastern Bus Station, or

Accommodation: Shashan Village Holiday Hotel, Shashan Road, Donggian Lake.

Tel: (0574) 8818 1188.





# People often ask me, 'Where's the most interesting place to travel in China?' Definitely it must be Xinjiang. 'Which part of Xinjiang?' Of course Kashi.

My first travel experience in Kashi was a 'shock' to me. Setting off from Gobi and southern Xinjiang which is covered with sand, then reaching a totally different place of th's ancient Islamic city, the process seems like an illusion. Hollow-eyed local folks with high noses can be found everywhere on the street. Deep alleys of the ancient city bring you back to the distant past, and the Grand Bazaar recreates the prosperous scenes of the Silk Road.

Kashi, which has a history of 2,000 years, was a city on the edge called 'Kashgar' in ancient times. It was one of the 36 countries in the western region during the Han dynasty (206 B.C - 220). In the Uygur language, Kashi, mean's 'a city built of jade gems'. Tian Shan mountains is its neighbour at the north while the Pamir Plateau is on its west and the Taklamakan desert on its east. Moving north further and passing the port of Taklamakan, you can travel to countries like Kyrgysztan, Tajikstan and Uzbekistan. You can also travel southwest, via the Karakoram port of the Pamir Plateau, to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. A land with well-developed transportation in modern age was also an important supply station on the Silk Road in ancient times. Nowadays, Kashi is still playing a significant role in the cross-border trade between

various west Asian countries.

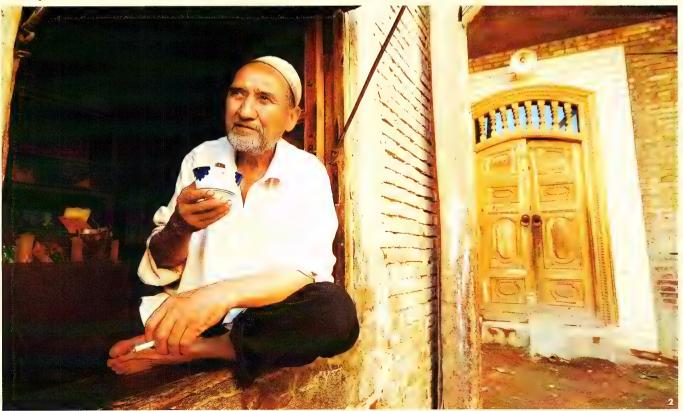
### A Home to 32 Ethnic Groups

I remember once I travelled to Yunnan and the tour guide told me that the area lives 26 ethnic minority groups. I was amazed at that time. However, Kashi is home to even more ethnic minorities, with a total of 32 groups, including Uygur, Hulzu, Tajik, Uzbek, Kirghiz, Russian and Mongol. Over half of the 56 ethnic groups in China can be found in Kashi. The majority of the population (about 91%) in Kashi is Uygur. Nearly every local you encounter on the street is Uygur, and compared with the Uygur majority, I am actually of the minority in Kashi.

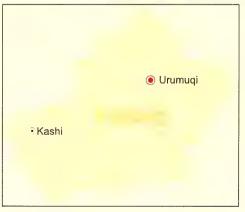
Travelling around Xinjiang, you would see mosques everywhere but the one in the city centre, namely the Etigar Mosque, is the most marvelous of its kind. This 500-year-old mosque has an architectural area of 16.8 thousand square metres. The mosque is mainly composed of the worship hall, the scripture-reading hall, the entrance tower and the yard. The entrance tower is stunning and the mosque can accommodate a congregation of a few thousand during worship time. No wonder it is the top mosque across China in terms of scale. Leaving the mosque, you can see the noisy

Kashi is full of Uygur heritage.
(by Huang Yanhong)

 Houses emerging above the ground have become a tourist attraction. (by Huang Yanhong)



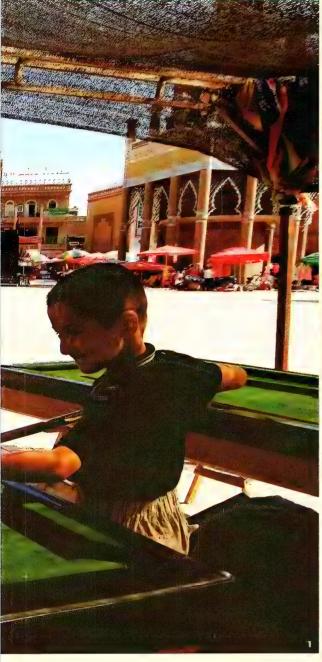




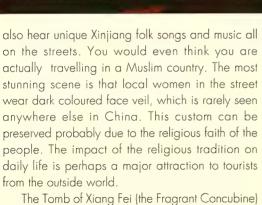
handicraft stalls on the square which catch the eyes of tourists. Nevertheless, I find that a 400-year-old main street beside the mosque has been widened and the buildings on the sides have become architecture of modern styles. To develop tourism, the local government renovated the street and built halls and shops of imitated ancient styles. Although the street has become more 'good looking', it is sad to see that the ethnic heritage of the street has also vanished.

### Women Covered by Face Veil

Kashi is a vibrant city where you can see crowds of people, Islamic style buildings as well as sparkling traditional ethnic clothing, and you can







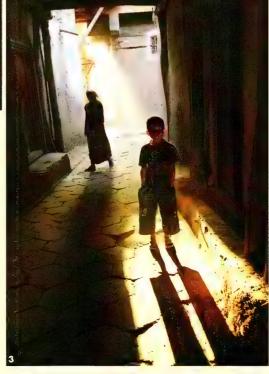
The Tomb of Xiang Fei (the Fragrant Concubine) is a must-go tourist spot, which is 5 km away from the urban area. Its official title is Apak Khoja Tomb. It is the largest Muslim tomb in Xinjiang built in 1640. It is composed of the scripture hall, the large

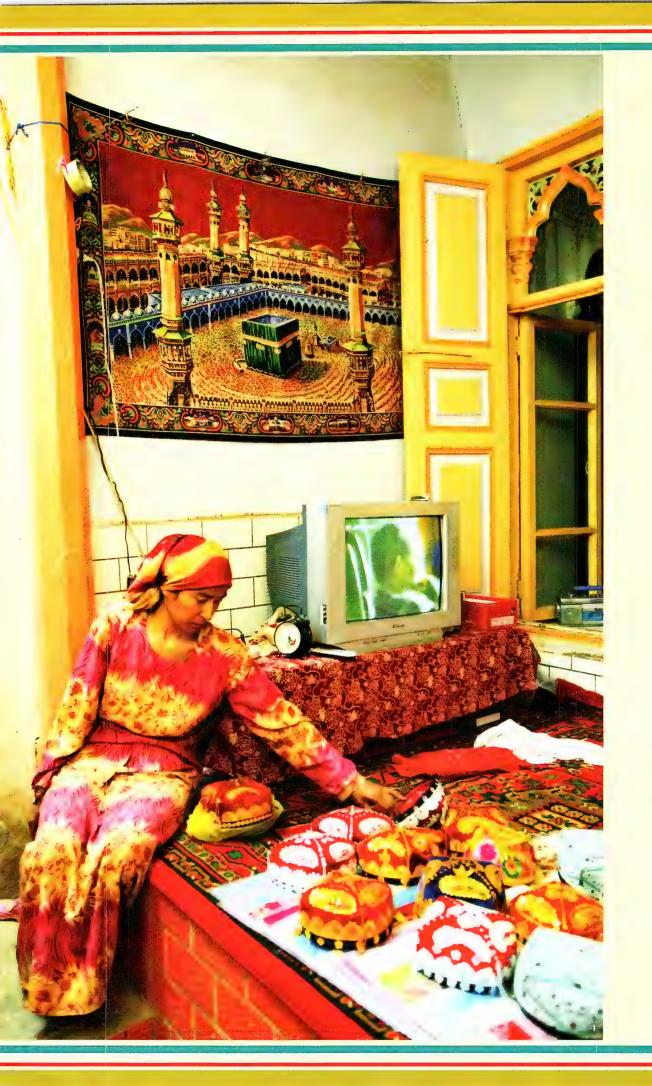


and comfortable home inside.
(by Huang Songhui)

3. The alley under abundant sunshine has a mysterious

3. The alley under abundant sunshine has a mysterious atmosphere. (by Huang Songhui)





- In a domestic handicraft workshop, the scarfs on the wall, the hats on the hearth and the embroidered items are the source of family income. (by Huang Songhui)
- 2. Children in front of the Etigar Mosque. (by Huang Yanhong)
- 3. Uygur women covered by face veils are walking along the alleys. (by Huang Songhui)
- 4. A Uygur barber is giving a haircut and shave to his customer. Would you dare to give it a try as well? (by Huang Songhui)
- 5. The lack of water on the high terrace makes carrying water an essential housework item for children. (by Huang Sonahui)

and small worship hall, entrance tower and main tomb chamber. The whole tomb garden is so grand and marvelous. Entering the main tomb chamber, you would feel the creepy atmosphere and the deepness of the premise. There is an array of 58 tombs of various sizes on the tomb slab. According to folklore, the Apak Khoja Tomb was also known as the 'The Tomb of Xiang Fei' because the concubine of Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty (1644 – 1911) was buried here.

# Historic Alleys and Old Residences of Ancient Terrace City

A friend of mine who knows my love for ethnic customs volunteers to show me around in the 'Old City' on the east of Kashi. I discovered it to be a yellow sand cliff emerging from the flat land. To us outsiders, we see it as a village but the locals name it 'high terrace'.

According to written records, these terrace residences are about 1,000 years old. These once sparkling but now decayed houses and the uneven

surfaces of stone tiled alleys is a reminder of the distance of ancient times and they simply amazed people.

When I stroll between the residences with awe, it feels like travelling through the tunnel of time. While walking along the alley under sunshine, I see the peace of the elders, the joy of little children, the sincerity of men and the ease of women. It seems that all the troubles and conflicts of humanity do not exist here. This place is a wholly different world.

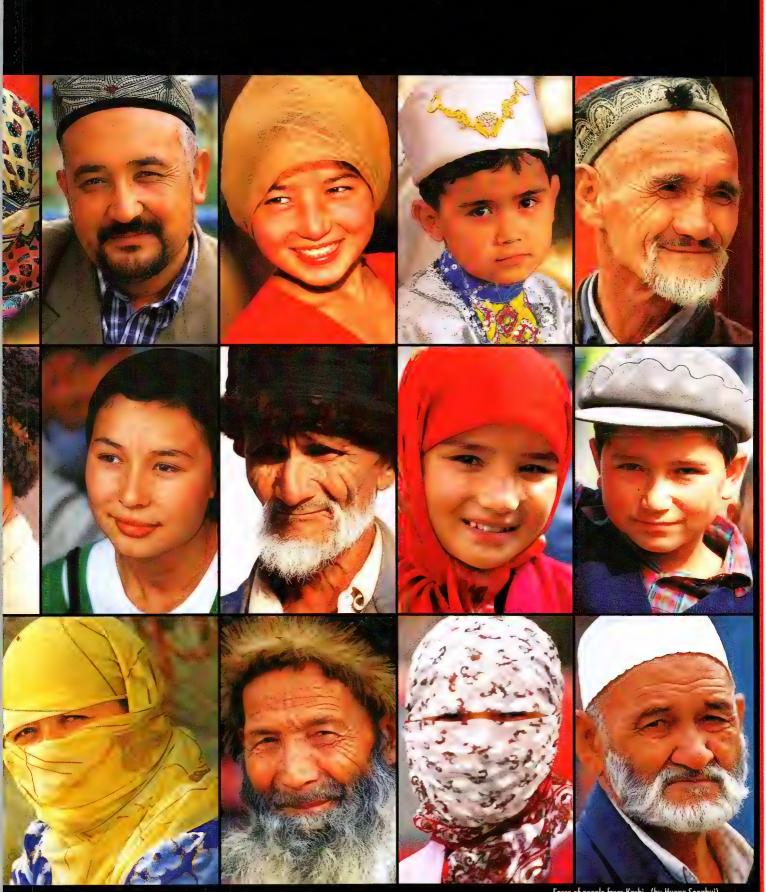




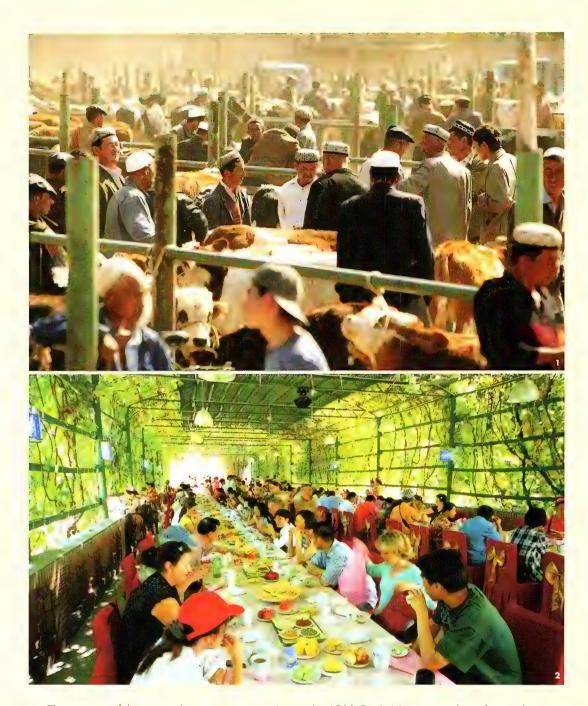








Faces of people from Kashi. (by Huang Songhui)



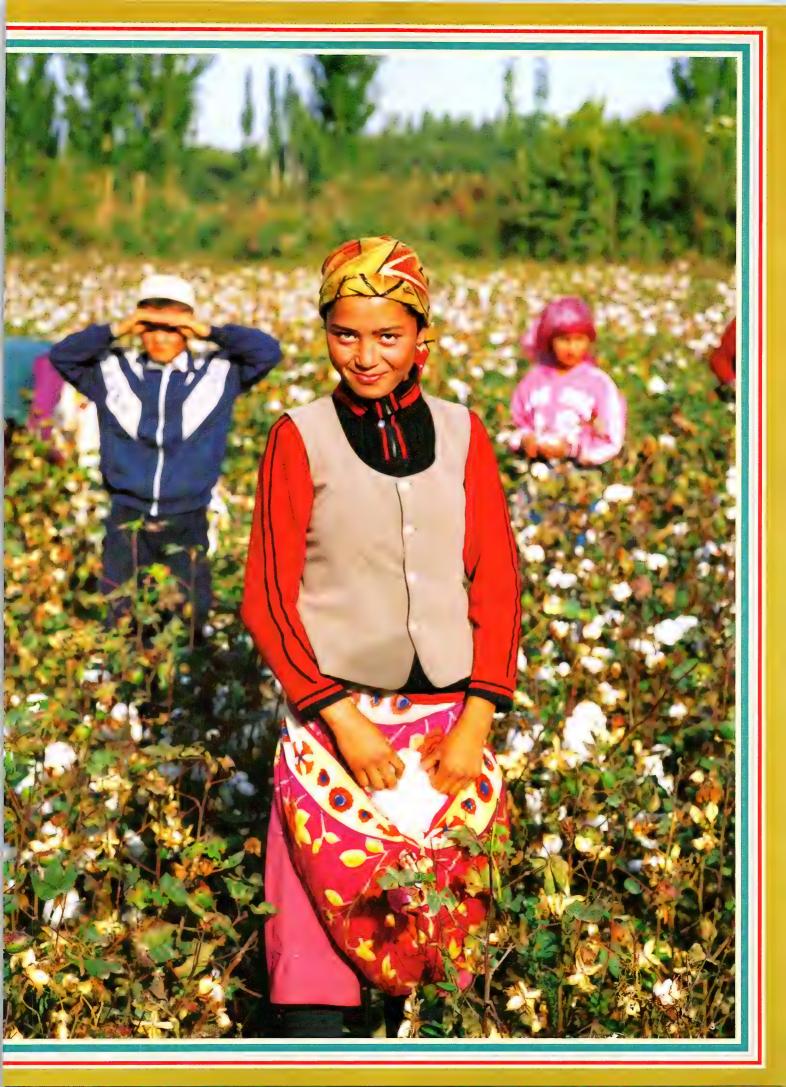
- On holidays, bazaars are packed with people and vehicles. (by Huang Songhui)
- 2. People enjoying lunch at the grape promenade of the Kashgar Hotel. (by Huang Yanhong)
- 3. Cotton fields are quite common in the countryside of Kashi. During harvest season, all family members are working in the field. (by Huang Songhui)

The structure of the terrace houses is stunning. Is a house with only a few large poplar logs be safe in foundation? To the residents, what to eat or what kind of house to live do not matter, as long as they can stay with their loved ones as a family. As a matter of fact the over 600 households here look like one big family to me. Everyone in the neighbourhood is living in harmony. All the folks would greet everyone they see in the street. I chat with an old man and he tells me that he has about 200 relatives in the neighbourhood.

# Hundreds of Domestic Handicraft Workshops

Motor vehicles are not allowed on the roads of

the 'Old City'. Not even a bicycle can be seen here. This makes the old alleys even quieter and you can forget about the hustle and bustle of urban life. Many houses have doors opened. Is there anything special about these houses? I take the guts to enter a yard and the hospitable hostress of the household welcomes me to go into the inner house. Little Uygur floral pattern hats and handmade scarves spread over the top of the earthy hearth. This house turns out to be a tiny handicraft workshop. Strolling along the 'handicraft' street, you would find hundreds of workshops and stalls of textile items, dyeing goods, jewellery, leather, boots, hardware finishings, wood, weavings, carpets, knifes and musical





instruments. It is really dazzling and fascinating. I just can't stop taking photos and purchasing handicrafts as souvenirs for my friends in Hong Kong.

### Hustling Bazaar

Visiting the hustling Great Bazaar of Kashi feels like being swirled in a kaleidoscope. There are many bazaars in Kashi but the Big Bazaar at the east gate, also known as the International Trade Market of Central and Western Asia, is the most famous one. The bazaar is on the bank of River Tuman at the east of Kashi city. It has an area of 130 yards, with about 5,000 fixed stalls and over 9,000 kinds of retail items available.

I come to the Great Bazaar on Sunday which is the day for bazaar shopping. The Great Bazaar is packed with people, with roads in the vicinity jammed by carts, motor vehicles and trolleys. One will be overwhelmed by the huge scale of the bazaar. It is systematically divided into different sections. If you want to buy a certain item, you can go to the section specialising in it. You can also experience the ways of trading on the ancient Silk Road such as barter and finger touching. All these cannot be seen anywhere else.

The outdoor Great Bazaar stall owners are mainly farmers from nearby villages and counties. Goods here are cheap and good. A delicate Yengisar knife only costs about 20 yuan here while a similar item would be sold at about 40 yuan in shops. Almost all the shoppers at the section of handmade embroidered goods are women. Their sharp-coloured headscarfs are simply gorgeous. The most attractive section is of course the one selling foods. You can find all sorts of fruit and grocery products here. If you are a bit tired after shopping, you can take a break and have a bowl of mutton soup and a roast kebab at a food stall. Just a few yuan and you can have your stomach

- Crowds of Uygur women in colourful head scarfs. It is the embroidery market of the Great Bazaar in Kashi. (by Huang Songhui)
- All copper handicrafts of the 'handicraft' street are handmade and sold at incredibly low price. (by Huang Songhui)
- 3. The Qarbagh Minorities Custom Park is 3 km from the urban areas of Kashi. Mutton kebab is a popular snack there. (by Huang Yanhong)







completely filled

If you find the trading activities too trivial, you can look for bigger businesses at the Mule and Horse Bazaar one kilometre away. With dust and sand flying in the air, your eyes cannot catch all the ongoing activities here. When you have just finished watching the auction of 'big-tail' goats, you may find that the sale of a cattle herd is already over... Haven't seen enough? You will have to come again next year!

Translated by Ezekiel Pang

#### Kashi Travel Tips

#### Transport

One daily flight between Kashi and Urumqi is the only air transport route available. In peak season, there are three flights every day.

Travelling time: about 1.5 hours. Fare: about 500~800 yuans Train service between Urumqi and Kashi is available.

There are 2 trains running in between daily.

From Urumqi to Kashi:

Train K886

Departure time:1:16 pm

Arrival time: 1 pm next day

Train 5806

Arrival time: 6:45 pm next day

Departure time: 4:16 pm From Kashi to Urumqi

Train K885

Arrival time: 2:52 pm next day Departure time: 4:16 pm

Train 5805

Departure time: 8:30 pm Arrival Time: 10:33 pm next day

#### Accommodation

All sorts of guest houses and hotels can be found in the city. In low season, the fee of a standard room at 2-star guest house is only 100 yuan per day. For peak season, about 150~180 yuan per day. A special feature of hotels in Kashi is that the long distance call to other parts of China is free.

Seman Hotel \*\*



Address: No 337 Semon Road

Tel: (0998) 255 2129

Special feature: transformed from the former Russian embassy of 1890. With elegant architectural style.

Kashgar Hotel \*\*



Address: No 52 Tawuguzi Road, Kashgar

Tel: (0998) 261 2362

Special feature: near the Great Bazaar of Kashi. Newly renovated. With comprehensive facilities.

#### Renmin Hotel \*\*



Tel: (0998) 282 3373

Special feature: located at the town centre and close to the train station. Transport is convenient.

#### Ticketing of tourist spots

The Xiang Fei Tomb: 15 yuan

The Etigar Mosque: 10 yuan

The Tomb of Yusof Has Hajib: 30 yuan

Terrace residences (Old City): 30 yuan

The Great Bazaar: free

#### Useful phone numbers

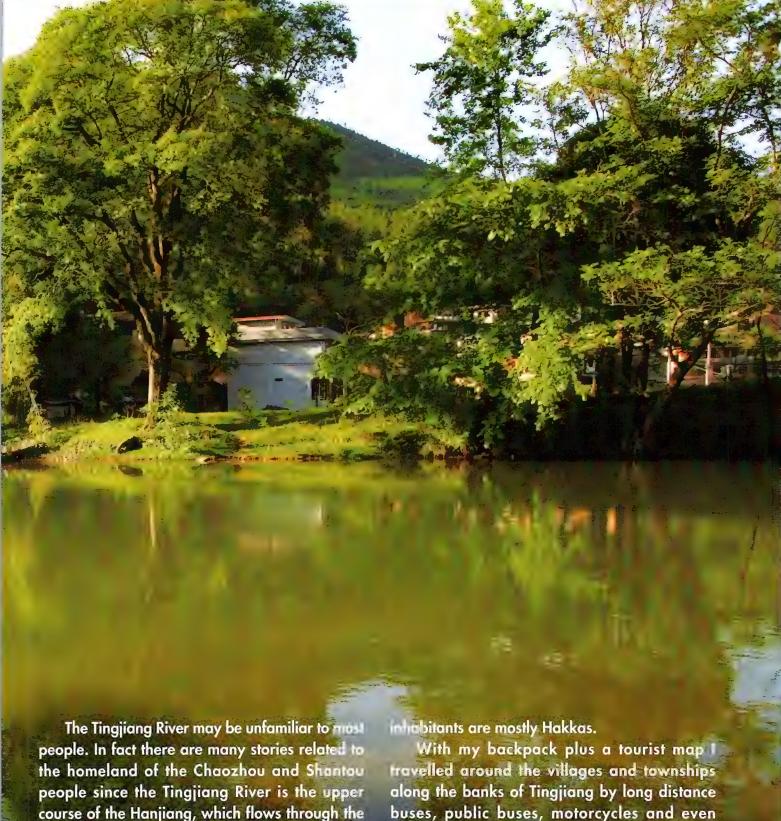
Kashi Airlines Ticketing Office: (0998) 232 2113

Kashi Tourism Bureau: (0998) 282 3172

China Travel Agency in Kashi: (0998) 282 7310 Kashi Tour Motor Company: (0998) 232 3891

Kashi Rental Car Company: (0998) 712 2524

7.411:144(0):24 Ten Days by IN West Fujian
Phofos & Article by Shi Baoxiu



course of the Hanjiang, which flows through the Chao-Shan areas.

Most interestingly, this is an area where one river forms the boundaries of two provinces. Through west Fujian Province it is called the Tingjiang River and in east Guangdong Province, the Hanjiang River. The Tingjiang River valley is known as 'the river of Hakka people' as its buses, public buses, motorcycles and even tricycles to collect the history left behind from the ancient Tingzhou. Staying in the old houses, I ate the local dishes and drank home-made rice wine with the locals. It was a rewarding ten-day trip to the Tingjiang River area. The homeland of the Hakkas was simple, quiet, peaceful and so enchanting that I was really reluctant to leave.

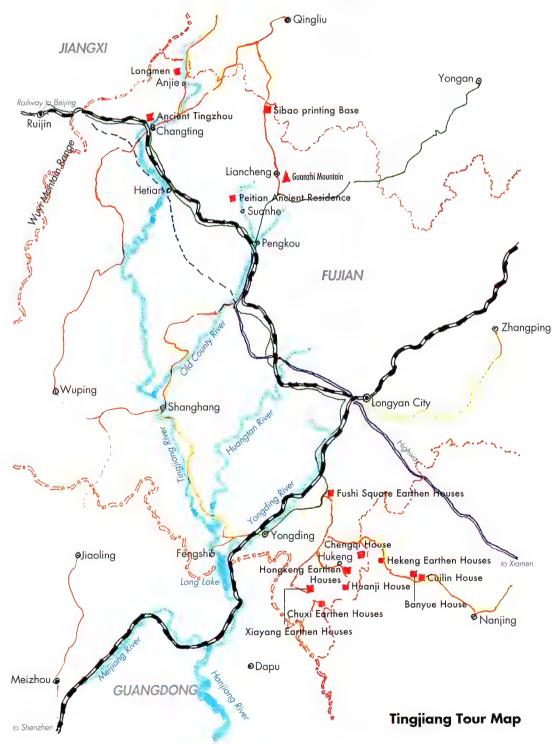


#### From Central Plains to the Tingjiang

During my ten days' visit I found out that majority of the residents along the river were Hakka. Many people have heard of the Hakka but know few details. Hakka (or *Kejia*) isn't one of the ethnic minorities but a subgroup of the Han Chinese. They immigrated several times and settled in Southwest China therefore named *Ke*, the guest to the locals. Dr. Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Republic of China, was a Hakka.

Mr. Huang, who once worked in the office of the

Annals of Changting County, has been retired for 15 years but the history of Hakkas' southern migration still remains fresh in his memory. He told me that a great number of Han Chinese moved southwards starting from the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) and especially during the last years of the Northern Song and Southern Song dynasties (960-1279). More and more people migrated to the south to escape the brutal ruthless plunder and barbarian cavalrymen in the north, eventually accounting for almost 60 to 70 percent of the local residents. They endured untold



 The Tingjiang River adds charm to the ancient town of Changting. The Wutong Tower and Wutong Bridge stand in the distance.





hardships on a roundabout trip to settle deep in the mountains of west Fujian, south Jiangxi and north Guangdong. Mr. Huang believed that the ancestors of the Tingjiang Hakkas mainly moved from Central Plains during the Song Dynasty when Jin troops invaded. He also told me that Sun Yat-sen's forefathers once moved from Hetian Village to Ningdu, south Jiangxi, and stayed there for six generations before going on to Zijin, Guangdong and finally settling in Zhongshan. This explains why a Sun Yat-sen Tower was built here in Hetian Village.

Before saying good-bye Mr. Huang suggested I should visit the Longmen (Dragon Gate), the source of the Tingjiang River, because the mountains and rivers there are unique.

### Longmen of the Tingjiang River, Dragon Roars in the Cave

I headed north from Changting Town the next day and not long afterwards came to a village surrounded by undulated mountains. The Tingjiang River winds around the rice fields and through green hills so well covered with pines and bamboo that naked rocks and cliffs were not visible. I asked the taxi driver to stop and I went to the riverside, which was blanketed by luxuriant vegetation. Villages along the river were hidden by tall ancient camphor trees. Oxen were grazing leisurely on the bank while the old herdsman lay in the shade of a tree making a bamboo hat. A tractor chugged over the bridge in the distance and a farmer, carrying a plough on his shoulder and pulling a bullock by hand, was going back home accompanied by his wife.

We drove through Datong and Xinqiao villages and then arrived at Anjie Township where the scene suddenly changed to steep mountains covered with dense trees full of vines and overgrown shrubs that somewhat resembled a temperate rainforest.

When walking over the bridge I met a middle-aged man with his wife and their toddler. I asked them where the Dragon Gate was and the man, pointing under the bridge, told me the cave over there with water flowing in was the right place. He added that in the rainy season turbulent torrents pelted down the mountain creating a truly magnificent scene. Its thundering roar could be heard several kilometres away. In a frightening way the torrents gushed out from the cave, like an evil dragon stirring the water to make violent river waves.

Talking about the traditional dragon gates in China — although the ones by the Yellow River between Shaanxi and Shanxi provinces; and in Luoyang, Henan province are most famous; they are the garges formed by the tall mountains whilst the one in the Tingjiang River is a natural cave. At that moment, I came to the end of the bridge and the

family's house close by so the woman invited me in for tea. It was an ordinary Hakka house with white walls and grey tiles in the courtyard but other houses along the road had been turned into a small building with cement and ceramic tiles. In the middle of the courtyard a flagstone trough had clear water continually running into it. I thought, what a waste it was! When I asked if the tap was broken, the man laughed, saying it was the spring water and it was no waste at all because the water flows back into the river again. It's unlike you city people who have to check the water meter every month, he said. Though my heart still ached at the sight, I wondered if the water could be drunk without boiling. Certainly, he affirmed, adding that they always drank the unboiled water and never had diarrhoea. To my surprise, as I lowered my head to drink, a stream of clear water gushed out, making me choke. His wife and child laughed as the man explained that the spring gushed out intermittently. Just then the green tea was ready. It tasted mellow and pure, which reminded me of a saying, 'only good water can make tasty tea' by Lu Yu (733 - 804), the ancient grand master of tea.

#### Hanqian Village, a War Retreat

Having walked along the bank and zigzagged through the cave on stone steps I suddenly found myself in a bright open space — such a charming scene I had never seen before, with small bridges, houses, paddy fields and green bamboo. Following the rise and fall of a loud voice I realised it was a villager urging his buffalo to plough the field. Several white ducks were paddling on the calm water that had passed through the cave. The Tingjiang River flows on from here to Changting.

The scene before my eyes would surely be the ideal world of most people's imagination.

Looking at the village on the opposite mountain made me think that one could have a full view of the Dragon Gate from one of the wooden buildings there. Turning onto a flagstone road I saw a man of about fifty, leaning on the gate, looking helplessly into distance. I asked him the village name and he replied it was Hanqian Village, in Anjie Township. From the way he spoke I understood he was an educated man. It turned out that Wu, the old man, used to be a primary school teacher. He became blind five years ago, from a condition inherited from his grandfather, and so could not entertain guests now.

Sitting on the stone steps in front of the gate Wu told me the stories of the Tingjiang River. Hanqian Village was inhabited by the Hakkas for many generations. His ancestors had come here along the river. During the chaotic years of war this place was a retreat, as safe and peaceful as was written in the

ancient books. Nowadays, it was totally different. Making money in such a remote village was more difficult than in the more developed coastal cities, so all the young people had gone to Shenzhen, Guangzhou or Shantou to find jobs. Once gone, they never come back, leaving the old, weak and sick people behind. Wu said that being blind meant he could not go anywhere by himself, and if he wanted to visit the other families he had to be led by others because the road here was full of bumps and hollows. Therefore he sat by the gate listening to the wind, the birds chirping and dogs barking. Occasionally visitors came and told him news from the world outside the village and he would feel better.

#### Tingjiang River Trade Ordered by Song Ci

The sun was just setting when I left Hanqian Village on my way back. The river looked so beautiful with an evening glow and it became wider nearer to Changting. I saw a boat on the river with a fisherman casting his net, creating numerous golden ripples. The driver said they could only catch small fish nowadays with the nets as there were no more big fish in the river.

That evening I skimmed the Tingjiang River books given by my friends. Only then I learned that the building of dams and reservoirs on the Tingjiang River had changed the navigation route and migration of big fish. The main reason for the decline of water transportation was the rapid development of the overland routes in the past few decades. The person who opened up trade routes on the Tingjiang River was Song Ci (1186 - 1249), the official in charge of criminal investigation in the Song Dynasty. In 1232, Song Ci assumed the post of magistrate of Changting County. As soon as he took up his post he investigated issues related to people's livelihood and listened to opinions. He learned that profiteers controlling the salt business often hiked salt prices. He found that salt was transported from Fuzhou, captial city of Fujian Province, first on the Minjiang River to Yongan and then carried to the village along the mountain path so the businessmen could reap colossal profits by illegitimate means. Therefore, he made a

- At the foot of Mount Wushi, rocky crags of limestone protrude from the water making ideal site for fishermen.
- 2. Changting people consider the Tingjiang's riverside area as their own backyard and so use it, like this elderly woman, to dry noodles in the sun.

#### More about Tingjiang River

The Tingjiang River is one of the four main water systems and also the third largest river of Fujian Province. Formerly the only water route going outside the province, the Tingjiang River valley is one of the main places inhabited by Hakka people. Originated from Jiangjunao, Zhiping in Ninghua, the river first flows into the Changting area and then into Guangdong Province after passing Changting county town. Then it converges with the Meijiang River in Sanheba forming the Hanjiang River and its artery flows into the sea in Chenghai County, Shantou City. The length of the Tingjiang River totals 328 kilometres, 285.5 kilometres in Fujian and 153.7 kilometres in Changting. Starting from the Song Dynasty, merchant ships came and went between Changting and Shantou, shipping salt, timber and some special local products. During its prosperous period the river always had several hundred ships berthed at its docks. Owing to the development of land transportation and the building of dams and reservoirs long distance, water transportation has been greatly reduced.



 A graceful, old banyan tree on the Tingjiang River bank at Shanghang county town under which Mao Zedong and Zhu De once played chess.

- 2. The garden on the Tingjiang River bank at Shanghang is still manually cultivated.
- 3. Overlooking Shanghang county town you can see a dense mass of old houses along the wide Tingjiang River.

definitive decision to open up a water route from the Tingjiang River to the Hanjiang River so that salt would be transported directly from Chaozhou in Guangdong to Changting. In this way the distance was greatly shortened and the price of salt thereby reduced, and was welcomed by the locals. From then on, trade in other goods along this water route developed rapidly. As a result Changting became a prosperous trading port in western Fujian and south of Jiangxi areas.

#### The Tingjiang River Flows Southeast

Passing through the once prosperous Changting, the Tingjiang River then flows at a vast expense through mountains and fields, villages and towns. On the way it connects with Nanshan River one side and the Zitian River on the other side and finally flows southeast deep into the mountains of Wuping County.

The rainy season had just started at that time so it was very dangerous. I looked down the Tingjiang River from the window of the bus and saw it was not as calm as in Changting — big rolling waves were attacking the cliffs on the both sides. We drove slowly on the rough mountain path, and arrived at 3:50 pm in Shanghang county town, taking almost eight hours from our start at Changting.

The Tingjiang River, hemmed in by the mountains over a long distance, meandered in the area of Shanghang county town, which was built, like other county towns, in a comparatively open space amid a continuous mountain range. Such places would be the first choice of habitats of government officials, and rich and powerful people. Certainly, the places selected would have rivers nearby as that was the most convenient way for rich and eminent people to travel.

I stayed in the tallest hotel by the river to have good views of the scenery. I went up to the top and the vast sky over the river and undulating mountains appeared before my eyes. But suddenly black clouds blotted out the sky turning the town and villages in the distance dark. Only the Tingjiang River reflected a streak of light over the horizon, looking a little lonely. As the clouds became more and more dense, the sky resembled the middle of the night, heralding the storm coming. During the ear-shattering, violent thunderstorm, with rain pouring down in sheets, the mountains, villages and fields were all blurred in a greyish veil.

The rain finally stopped at about 5 pm and the sky became a lighter grey. The ancient banyan standing at the north end of the old bridge on the Tingjiang River was then dimly visible. Mao Zedong and Zhu





De, the former CCP leaders, once played chess under this tree in the years they were in western Fujian.

#### Mianhuatan Shoal Becomes the Longhu Reservoir

I could not see the Tingjiang River any more since it went on flowing southeast. The river between Shanghang and Yongding winds around dangerously steep high mountains so there is no highway there yet. After flowing past Fengshi Town 20 kilometres from Yongding county town, the river enters Guangdong Province. The former Mianhuatan Shoal, which used to frighten boatmen out of their wits, had been made into the Mianhuatan reservoir. Probably the local people thought that the name Mianhuatan (cotton) was outdated so they changed it into Longhu (Dragon Lake). It has about 68 islets

scattered. The historically notorious Mianhuatan once tightly controlled the Tingjiang River's route into the Hanjiang River in Guangdong with steep, sheer cliffs on its both sides, its watercourse as narrow as a kettle's mouth with many submerged reefs. 70 or 80 years ago both Fengshi Town and Dapushi Town were important places for goods transportation, known as the 'throat' of Fujian and Guangdong, and had earned the title of 'little Hong Kong'. At that time the long street in Fengshi Town had seven docks, six guild halls, five banking houses and more than 300 houses dealing with transportation of goods. When the railway and highway were built, water transport route gradually declined and totally died out with the building of the reservoirs and power stations on the Tingjiang River.



Long ago, Rewi Alley, a New Zealand writer, travelled in western Fujian Province. She was spellbound by Changting as soon as she got there. She said China had two very beautiful small cities: one was Fenghuang City in Hunan Province, the other was Changting in Fujian Province. Today Fenghuang City has become a famous scenic spot for both Chinese and foreigners while Changting stays hidden in the steep unbroken mountain range, keeping its natural, simple quietness. I liked it very much, this small city that once appeared in my dreams, so I stayed there for four days on my ten-day trip in western Fujian.

#### Fresh Goat Milk on the Street

I got up early, at 5:30 in the morning as I am used to making best use of the time to see places that I like very much. There is a saying in China — a whole day's work depends on a good start in the morning — so I did not like to waste the good early morning time.

City people who are used to enjoying themselves at night would still be in deep sleep at that time.

Walking on the street I saw a lot people already up, including street cleaners, the elderly doing morning exercises, middle school students rushing to school, peddlers selling vegetables and so on. Walking together with them, I was soon on the Shuidong Bridge over the Tingjiang River. Right then, I heard unusual footsteps behind me, unlike human footsteps, heavy and slow. As I turned I saw cattle were crossing the road in a line. On my way to Sanyuan Pavilion along Wutong Street I saw some elderlies going to the riverside and city wall and others performing Taichi in the square. Then, what attracted my attention was a young man, squatting behind a white goat, while nearby some older people lined up with a glass bottle in each hand for the milk. They told me how nice the goat milk was, nutritious and natural, and much better than the factory-made



found myself by the riverside watching about 30 or 40 women washing clothes there. I felt emotional seeing them thrashing the clothes and bed sheets with wooden clubs. The crisp, rhythmic sound brought me back to my childhood.

As a child I often went to the riverside with my mother to wash clothes. She first put the clothes in the water, then broke the Chinese honey locust (*Zaojiao*, or *Fructus Gleditsiae Sinensis*, a natural ingredient for detergents) into pieces and immersed them in the basin. Soon soap bubbles formed and she swished the clothes around in them. That was the time to beat the clothes so the soap could disperse the dirt. The last step was to rinse the clothes in the river water. Finally the clothes were dried on the shrubs at the river.

Almost all the Chinese people washed clothes like that before the existence of running water and washing machines. But beyond my expectation, people were still washing clothes like that in a 21st century city. An old man drying noodles on the bamboo steamer told me that every family there now had washing machine and running water but many women still did it that way because it was a social time where they could wash in flowing water while also chatting with friends. It has been a habit of generations before them.



- The renovated section of the city wall from Wutong Tower to Wushi Mountain and the morning market on the Wutong Bridge.
- 2. The stone arch at the temple in Changting county town.
- 3. At night, the lights are turned on in the Wutong Bridge when it becomes a snack bar and tea house.

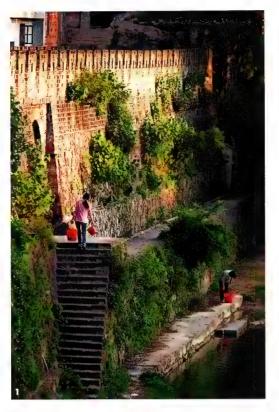
milk products. The young man was apparently there every morning and his business was flourishing. In a few minutes he finished milking, then tied the goat on a tricycle and whistled as he left.

#### **Beating Clothes by the River**

From 6 to 8 am, Changting is a busy scene, full of vigour. Walking from Nandajie Street to Shuiximen Gate I saw age-old shops along the streets that had become alive today. The snack stands were surrounded by many people in a hurry to go to their offices and schools. Some were eating while walking. The old woman at the stand I went to was making potato cakes. I was really surprised by the price of the cakes, cheap at only 20 cents each. I followed the local example of squatting by the stand to eat them. When the fourth was finished I was really full, and had only spent 80 cents for breakfast.

Walking a dozen steps from the Shuiximen Gate I





#### City Wall and Towers Become Exercise Grounds

Walking west along the road between the ancient city wall and Tingjiang River I soon arrived at Wutong Bridge, where people were selling breakfast, vegetables, meat, bean curd, live chickens and ducks and also all kinds of fresh fruits. What a bustling bridge it was with lots of people, men and women, young and old, crowded there buying things.

The ancient city wall was close to the southern end of the bridge and it was easy climb a dozen brick steps after passing through a small gate to get to the

top. The city wall is six metres wide — three cars could be driven abreast on it. Many veterans were jogging, walking or doing *taichi* there.

Then I learned that the areas around the pavilions and towers of Changting were divided into exercise grounds for different groups of elderly. Therefore, I would say that the traditional virtues of respect for the elderly and filial piety of the Hakka people had a solid foundation in Changting. Wutong Bridge was the place for the retired teachers of Changting County to relax and do exercises. They come here to play swords, practice *kungfu* and dance every morning. At about 9 am more than ten tables were put up for people to play mah-jong. They chatted and drank tea here in the afternoon. In the evening snack stands were put up to serve food. It is such a busy arrangement for the bridge.

There is no fence around the city wall since it is one of the common cultural relics of Changting so people can come and go freely.

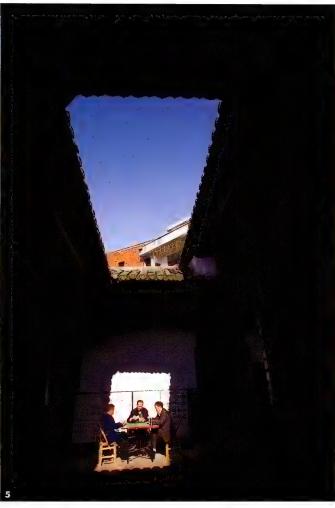
#### **Old City Wall Prevents Invasions and Floods**

As a thousand-year-old prefecture capital, many historical ruins of different dynasties have been preserved in Changting. The 1,400-year old city wall built in the Tang Dynasty (618 — 907) and towers built in the Ming Dynasty (1368 — 1644) have been renovated in recent years. Standing on the Shuidongmen Bridge I noticed that the city wall was about nine metres above the water with a solid base built with grey stone blocks. Two lofty battlements served as beacon towers on each end of the bridge. But the city wall inside that close to the city was much lower than the outside. I was confused so I asked an old man doing exercises there if he knew why. He said he had heard that the outer wall has already high









enough to save people from floods and invasion. It is already impregnable with both a natural barrier and fortified high wall.

#### **Chinese Herbs Sold by Wutong Tower**

I stayed for quite a long time in Wutong Tower area because many people gathered there in the early morning to sell things. They left gradually and by noon 70 to 80 percent of them had gone home. In the evening only peddlers selling fruits remained. The biggest market attraction were the piles of Chinese herbs, as high as haystack, with several hundred to a thousand types. There, I noticed a thin old man with a long white moustache selling herbs, who looked more than 70 years old but stood with divine poise. The Chinese herbs sold there were genuine wild plants because they still had mud on it and the price was fair. The ginseng and Chinese angelica looked totally different to the ones sold elsewhere as they had turned white due to being washed with soap and then smoked with sulphur. Tonics were sold by all the stands with functions explained. Seeing this makes me think that a location deep in the mountains had not only provided Hakka people with a hiding place from war for several generations but also good natural conditions for the collection of Chinese herbs according to the traditional pharmacopoeia.

#### The Old Style on Diantou Street

I entered a narrow lane that looked like a blind alley. To my surprise a bustling commercial street appeared right before my eyes at the end of the lane, with stands selling meat and various bean curds. The snack stands were crowded with people because it was lunch time. Those people who stayed at home came out for lunch at twelve, very punctually. This was the most famous street in Changting — Diantou Street — which used to be a distribution centre for goods from overseas and Guangdong during the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368 - 1911). The 1.5 kilometre-long winding street connected with the old port outside Shuiximen Gate. Walking along the street, I found its old appearance had been preserved with many antique shops opened even though they were no longer prosperous as they had been in the past. One shop that I liked very much displayed a lot of banking securities, passes, tax receipts and tax stamps issued during the Long March period (1934 - 1936) on the wall as well as some Kuomintang

- 1. The city wall from Shuidong Bridge to Wushi Mountain is tall, functioning both as a military stronghold and flood dyke.
- 2. The young man taking his goat home after selling its milk.
- 3. Goat milk sold in front of Sanyuan Pavilion is favoured by the old folks, and costing only six yuan for one kilogram, it is cheap and fresh.
- 4. Washing in the clear flowing river is a kind of enjoyment.
- 5. People of the Liu clan are killing time in the Liu ancestral temple.



 The Wutong Gate archway seems like a time tunnel in the morning sunlight.

- 2. Though a digital camera can create good photos some people still prefer an artist to draw pictures for their forefathers in Changting.
- 3. Taoists in the initiation ceremony for the Niuling Temple of Wealth.
- 4. You will have a good view of Wutong Bridge through the battlement of the low city wall.

and Chinese Communist Party medals, badges, souvenir badges and party badges in various shapes.

The two portrait shops where artists drew with charcoal pencils were eye catching. I watched for a while as some peasants came with yellowed and crumpled pictures of their ancestors, not more than an inch tall, to have an enlarged pictures drawn, when they would place on their memorial tablets (a common way to worship their ancestors at home). To my surprise I saw a picture of the early period of the Republic of China showing the faded figure of an old man with skullcap, long gown and a long moustache, looking so cool.

#### **Wood Carving Shops**

The tailor near the drawing shop was doing very good business selling cheongsams, Tang clothes and embroidered skirts. I carried on and

found eight or nine wood carving workshops with wood piled high inside and carved Buddhas, God of Wealth, and Guan Yu, the God of War carrying a big knife were being shown. I entered one workshop with the boss named Zheng, a man who learned wood carving from the young age of 18. Now he has started his own business at the age of 30 and just made a deal to carve 18 Arhats. Since the big old trees are now protected he could not buy logs with a diameter of one metre any more. Therefore, he had to buy camphor segments stuck together to create a diameter of one ft. (equivalent to 0.333 m). He said there used to be over 10 wood carving workshops on the street but some had closed due to the shortage of timber. Since he changed early enough to making smaller items that could be used in family worship halls or as handicraft articles his business had not suffered badly.



Just at that moment my stomach started rumbling, reminding me of my hunger. I saw a snack bar with 'Shaxian Snacks' on the lintel, so I went in. Though it was small, the business was booming. I bought a dish of noodles, a bowl of wonton and five small meat steamed dumplings for a total of only three yuan and they all tasted really delicious. When most customers had left I seized the chance to chat with the boss by sitting on a bench in front of the snack bar. The boss, surnamed Hu and in his 50s, told me that he could not find a job for several years when he came back from the countryside. Then he opened this snack bar to make a living. He cherished his hard-earned income very much, enshrining honesty as his cardinal principle in his business. He never used inferior materials to cheat customers and made food with great care. Though his profit was little, his business flourished, with many of his customers being his

**Honesty in Business Brings in Customers** 









neighbours. Hakkas always put honesty first in doing business.

#### Traces of Scholars and Revolution

Passing by the Confucian Temple of Tingzhou crossing Diantou Street I turned right to the museum of Tingxian County, opposite the Sanyuan Pavilion Square. During the Song Dynasty (960 — 1279) it used to be Longshan Academy where many Hakka scholars had been trained and in the Ming Dynasty (1368 — 1644) it became an examination hall where the Hakka scholars of the eight counties of Tingzhou took the imperial examinations for *xiucai* (official scholars). And when Mao Zedong, the former CCP Chairman led the Fourth Red Army, he once used it as an office after arriving at western Fujian in 1929. Later it served as the site of Fujian Soviet People's Government. Nowadays it is the Changting County Museum.

Entering the big courtyard I felt the coolness of the shade of the ancient cypress and camphor trees. The Exhibition Hall of Changting Revolutionary History and Museum of Tingzhou Hakka People stand on either side of the courtyard. I learned of the migration

history of the Hakkas and their diversion process and routes of their thousand-year history in the museum.

#### The Elders Pass Time at the City Gate

Going back to the Sanyuan Pavilion around 3 pm I saw many old people, in their 60s or 70s and even some 80s, in the archway of the city gate. They were chatting as they sat on the stone benches or in wheelchairs, some holding their grandchildren and others with Buddhist beads in their hands. Those people were away from the mainstream of the society, who no longer needed to work hard or undertake household duties, so all they had to do was relax and enjoy their remaining life. I sat nearby quietly listening to them talking about family and state affairs.

Sitting beside me was a thin old man surnamed Liu who used to be a *fengshui* practitioner. He told me that those old people always came here from 9 to 12 am and 3 to 6 pm. This city gate archway served as a headquarters for the old people of the county. That day he told his own stories to his old friends, saying that his ancestors had lived in Tingzhou and his grandfather and father were famous *fengshui* 

practitioners in their time. During the Cultural Revolution (1966 - 1976) they earned a bad name for spreading feudal superstition so the whole family was sent to a village to do farm work. They came back to the city twenty years later and he resumed his old job as a fengshui practitioner. His business boomed at once so he bought a new house and lived comfortably in peace. Now his children have all grown up with families and careers of their own. So it was time for him to enjoy himself talking with his old friends here.

As Liu was talking an old woman chipped in, 'I haven't seen Old Wang, the bean curd maker, for several days. How is he?' An old man on the wheelchair said that he had passed away yesterday from a stroke and that it happened quickly. They all sighed but soon they shifted their subject of conversation...

Young men and women hurriedly past the long archway on bicycles coming from work but no one paid attention to the people sitting there...

#### The Small City is Full of Life at Night

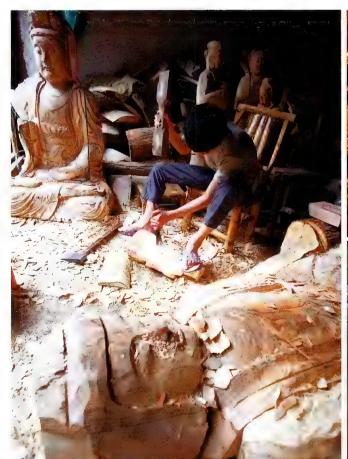
It was getting dark at 7 pm in Changting but all the snack bars and restaurants were ablaze with lights. Hakka people liked to eat Hakka flavoured food and they always entertained quests with their special food. My new friends from Changting gave me a farewell dinner in Changting Hakka Restaurant, west of the Sanyuan Pavilion Square. After dinner we walked to the Confucian Temple along the examination hall. The lawn of the square was crowded with people, old and young, men and women, and many children were fishing with their parents at an inflatable pond containing colourful plastic fish. There was an iron ring on the mouth of each fish so it was easy for children to catch them. They shouted with pleasure when they got a fish.

I passed Diantou Street again where some snack bars, barbershops, groceries and drugstores were still opened and brightly lit while the others were closed. The once bustling street in the daytime looked quieter at that moment. The lonely bright moon hanging in the sky reflected on the winding narrow street brought my thoughts back to the old street as it would have been several hundred years ago. Walking out the Shuiximen Gate I suddenly heard someone stirring the water. I bent over the fence to see what was happening and saw a man washing clothes there in the moonlight. I knew that it was a Hakka custom for the women, not the men, to do the washing and cooking.

That was a rare exception.

Translated by Wang Zengfen

- Diantou Street was already a trading centre during the Ming and Qing dynasties.
- 2. Wood carving workshops can be found everywhere in Diantou Street.
- 3. The county town of Changting is still full of people at night, coming and going. The street snack bars are always crowded.
- 4. The archway of the city gate is a good place for the elders to get together to chat.









# Wushi Mountain Hakkas' Singing Paradise

On the morning of the third day of my trip, it was drizzling, with mist settled on the huge ancient trees on Wushi (Black Rock) Mountain. Although Wushi Mountain is very small (only 28 m high), the ancient Tingzhou people cared very much about this isolated mountain of green limestone. The side of the mountain nearest to the Tingjiang River is very precipitous. There is a huge calcium carbonate rock on this side of the mountain that stands like a vertical broadsword after having been weathered over thousands of years. Thanks to the people who forged their way through the mountainside and built towers and pavilions, these dangerous cliffs have been transformed into beautiful sights along the Tingjiang River.

#### A Place for 'Hidden Dragons and Crouching Tigers'

Atop Wushi Mountain there are many ancient buildings with interesting stories. Some of the stories have connections with some legendary figures. For example, the Zhuangyuan Tower on the summit is a memorial building for the God of Literary Talent. However, I didn't expect that the God of Literary Talent was that ugly, vicious and coarse. It's hard to



believe this was the god who controlled the careers and honour of all students and literati. Standing on the top of the Zhuangyuan Tower, I watched the Tingjiang River flowing through half of Tingzhou. Only from this high spot could I believe that Wushi Mountain was indeed the town's southeastern summit.

Chairman Mao Zedong also visited Wushi Mountain. He learned that the name of this tower expressed the meaning of 'having great success', so he established the 'Red Army' (the Revolutionary Committee of Changting County) in the tower.

On the side of the mountain close to the river stands the Song Ci Pavilion. It was built to commemorate the virtuous official Song Ci who carefully controlled the Yangtze River and opened up



the navigation of the Tingjiang River.

#### Folk Songs from Wushi Mountain

When the rain stopped, I came down the side of the mountain closest to the river. There were very few visitors at Wushi Mountain. I asked an old man who was cleaning the Song Ci Pavilion, 'It's so beautiful here, alongside the Tingjiang River. How come there are so few visitors?' The old man stopped what he was doing and told me that I didn't come at prime time. People usually come here in the early mornings to exercise and late afternoons to sing folk songs. I continued to ask if the singing was some kind of performance. He waved one of his hands, saying that it was just a commonplace residents entertaining

themselves, starting around 3 pm and ending at 5 pm. The residents came here everyday, save for heavy wind or rain, to sing.

After lunch and a short nap, I rushed to the bridge at the east of the river, and then climbed to the east part of the wall that connects to Wushi Mountain. I noticed many old people and young women heading to Wushi Mountain. As soon as I arrived at the Song Ci Pavilion, I heard singing. The pavilion was packed with elderly audiences listening attentively. The narrow stone steps leading to the pavilion were also crammed with residents. It turned out that a singing party was held in the Memorial Pavilion of Shangguan Zhou, a Qing famous artist painter. The participants were singing folk songs. A lot of people

- Every afternoon, the Song Ci Pavilion on Wushi Mountain is packed with old people singing folk songs.
- No matter whether it is a wedding, funeral or birthday, Hakkas invite people to sing folk songs to enliven the atmosphere.



were also sitting on the slope, and on the huge rocks in the river, I noticed most were over 50 years old. I found an available spot to sit down. They sang in a really high pitch and while it sounded melodious and pleasant, I couldn't understand a single sentence. After a while, I asked an old man beside me for help and he was very happy to 'translate' for me. My thanks to him.

All of a sudden, a man of over 50 sitting under a big camphor tree started to sing, 'Roosters fight by running into each other, goats fight with their horns; men fight for the world, women fight for husbands'.

Well, this song provoked the female singers at present. They discussed for a while and chose a representative of the same age to sing for their group. She sang, 'Every earthly man relies on honour and fame, some stab other people in the back. Every folk song needs to be shared by women, and every harmonious family needs women. Folk duets lose their charm without women, and families suffer disorder without women taking care of the chores'.

After she finished, huge applause erupted. It is true that Hakka women in China are famous for their virtues, diligence and endurance.

# Hakka Opera Resembles Northeast China's Popular Duet

When the singing reached its climax, loud music from silk stringed instruments came from the riverside Longshou (Dragon Longevity) Pavilion, followed by crisp clear singing. A lot of people then flooded to the Longshou Pavilion. The performance staged here







1. Singers gather on the side of Wushi Mountain close to the river.

- 2. The Shangguan Pavilion is mostly a centre for female singers.
- 3. It's great entertainment to sing folk songs in one's spare time.

lasted from dozens to over one hundred rounds without pause, so my 'translator' could not translate each sentence for me. The audience sometimes burst into laughter and sometimes looked serious. My translator could only tell me the rough meaning, saying that this was a traditional Hakka opera. The story goes like this: There was a couple who loved each other very much. But when the husband passed the imperial examination and was given an official rank, he never returned home. So the wife pretended to be a man and went to take the imperial examination too. She also passed it. Then she found her husband and humiliated him in public. Finally, they both returned home and continued with their farm life.

Later, I also saw this form of performance at the opening ceremony of a new temple in Niuling and Tongjiyan. I found that this was indeed a Hakka tradition. Whenever there is a wedding, funeral, birthday party or opening of a store, people invite a Hakka opera troupe to perform for them.

My 'translator' also told me that these elderly singers lived in the county proper or nearby countryside. The folk songs they sang were love songs they learned when they were teens. Besides that, they were also able to improvise the lyrics. These old people live quietly at home and no longer have to worry about supporting the family. Some of them have even lost their spouses. Even though they are no longer young, they often gather here to recall the past and relive the romance they experienced when they were young. By singing out loud, it seems that they are brought back to the good old days.



# Liancheng Centre of Hakka Customs

Starting at Changting, I walked along the Tingjiang River and after Hetian, I reached Songmao Mountain(995 m high). In the village of Zhongfu, a conspicuous billboard is set up on the roadside, which reads 'the starting point of the Long March' (a massive military retreat undertaken by the Red Army of the Chinese Communist Party during 1934 - 1936). Some people described the Long March as a 'painful military transferral'. Now almost all soldiers and generals who participated in the Long March have passed away. Changting, an abundant and prosperous business port run by Hakkas for about 1,000 years, once provided the Red Army unlimited food and financial aid. The Red Army lived a comfortable life in Changting after a series of uprisings (including the Nanchang Uprising) launched by the Chinese Communist Party in 1927. However, this place was later transformed into a bloody battlefield where the Red Army suffered a heavy loss.

After climbing over Songmao Mountain where the Red Army and the Kuomintang troops battled, I entered the territory of Liancheng.



#### Drunk at a Farmer's Inn in Peitian

I got off the bus at a fork in the road close to Pengkou, then took a tricycle, for only seven yuan, to Peitian. The driver told me secretly that if I stayed in his home, he could save me the 30 yuan entrance ticket. So I followed him to his home, an ancient-style courtyard house, where I enjoyed a decent cheap meal.



Afterwards, he guided me to a small house and hanging above its gate was a board which read 'Farmer's Inn'. The owner surnamed Wu, ran this small wood inn with his wife. They were both over 70 and still healthy enough to manage this place on their own without hiring any employees. Wu definitely knew how to do business. He told me room and board was 70 yuan per day, or if I opted out of the meals it only

cost 30 per day. Since I didn't know where to eat, I decided to enjoy full package. You never know — grandma's cooking may be tasty. Soon they prepared a table of food for me, including steamed fish, stir-fried pork with bamboo piths, steamed smoked chicken, and shrimp and tofu soup, as well as a bottle of warm yellow wine. Grandma's cooking was quite savoury. I was so hungry that I ate more than half of all the

- 1. Peitian in Liancheng County is an ancient Hakka farming village.
- 2. Ancient-style houses, streets, and the peaceful leisurely farmers' life are the attractive features of Peitian.





dishes. The old couple just sat beside me persuading me to drink more. They said their home made yellow wine didn't have much alcohol, so I drank five cups in a row. Unexpectedly, the yellow wine had an effect on me, afterwards I showered and passed out as soon as I hit the bed. It was 6 am when I woke up. It was the first time that I got drunk on homemade yellow wine. Later I was told that the Hakkas' homemade yellow wine was much stronger than Shaoxing yellow wine.

#### A Hidden, Ancient Hakka Farming Village

In the morning, I strolled around the village, visiting farmers' houses. Every household here is surnamed Wu. They are very nice and live a leisurely life. People can be seen chatting everywhere. They look very relaxed no matter if they are walking, riding bicycles, carrying things, or herding cattle.

I climbed up the mountainside to look out over Peitian. A huge ancient farming village appeared

before my eyes; it was hidden in the centre of western Fujian and surrounded by mountains on three sides. This village was an impressive and representative complex created by Wu-surnamed Hakkas during their migration to the south of China. With a history of over 800 years, the peaceful village consists of 30 courtyard houses, 21 ancestral halls, six studies, two memorial archways and a one-km-long ancient street. Every building has exquisite wood and stone carvings, couplets and plaques. Some of them are very precious artefacts. It seems that some of the residents may have been tired of these dark, old, humid houses, so they built concrete houses along the small river in the village regardless of any regulations. Looking down from the mountaintop, these grey concrete buildings looked extremely ugly and they block the view of the village. Without a doubt the government would soon tear them down.

#### Guanzhi — the Hakkas' Sacred Mountain

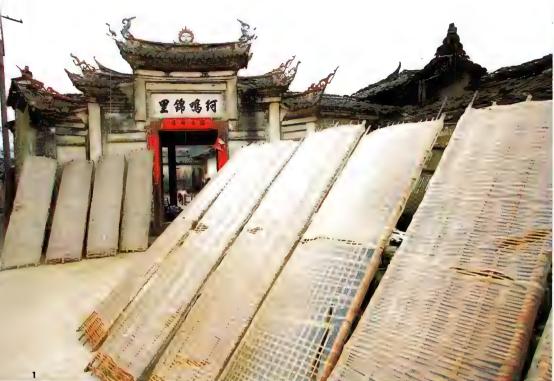
To get to Liancheng County proper from Peitian Village, you need to take a bus from Pengkou. There are many minibuses that go there as well, which cost six to seven yuan. When I arrived there, I stayed on the seventh floor of a hotel standing alone on the border of the county proper. On the downside it had no elevator, but on the upside I could overlook the Guanzhi Mountain (Judge's Hat) from my patio.



I got up around 5 am the next day. Guanzhi Mountain emerged in the first rays of the sun. Guanzhi Mountain got its name because it looks like an ancient official's hat — the Xiezhi (a legendary animal credited with the ability to distinguish between right and wrong) hat. It is characterised by its Danxia landform (red cliffs and red walls of sandstone and conglomerates). Surrounded by water, it's not very steep or high, so the mountain is pretty easy to climb.

- I. Guanzhi Mountain beside Liancheng County.
- 2. Many inns have been opened by farmers in Peitian.
- 3. Wu Lie is a famous literati of Peitian Village.
- 4. Peitian villagers are used to hanging bamboo baskets from their ceilings.











Maybe because it contains many picturesque scenic spots, Guanzhi Mountain is honoured as the Hakkas' Sacred Mountain by the locals. On the mountain there is a huge rock towering into the sky, shaped like a cudgel. This rock is imagined by people as the 'root of life', pairing off the Nüyin (Feminine) Rock at the bottom of the mountain. It seems that many mountains of the Danxia landform have pairs of yin and yang rocks.

In the afternoon I went to Zhu'an Hamlet. However, it is actually nothing like the hamlets used by bandits in north China in the past. In south China, a 'hamlet' is a general term for isolated precipitous peaks, such as Bajiao Hamlet in Guangxi Autonomous Region and Tiantang Hamlet in Anhui Province. Zhu'an Hamlet is extremely dangerous, and was exploited by bandits over 50 years ago.

#### Sibao Block Printing House of Hakkas

In the west of Fujian Province, Liancheng is the place with the most Hakkas' cultural heritage. Apart from ancient Peitian Village, there are Yunlong Bridge, Yusha Bridge and Sibao Block Printing House, as well as some intangible cultural heritage such as Luofang

Village's 'Zou Gu Shi' activity (literally translated as Walking Stories, a cultural activity held on the 15th day of the first lunar month). Among them, the Sibao Block Printing House was the base of printing industry in China during the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368 - 1911) and it had a dominant role in south China at that time. I heard of it long time ago, and finally got to see it with my own eves!

I took a bus in Liancheng to Sibao. It was only 25 km, but it took the bus more than one hour to get there. When I arrived, I found that Sibao had lost its ancient cultural flavour and only modern streets and buildings could be found. After asking around, I finally found the Sibao Block Printing Museum hidden in a back lane. In the museum there were no other visitors besides me. It mainly exhibited printing blocks of characters and pictures. Except for the ancient books and blocks, most of the displayed items here were replicas. After I left the museum, I entered a small lane and saw a beautiful archway, in front of which were placed many bamboo strips. The bamboo strips were covered by white film, which I thought was ancient paper making. I immediately asked a craftsman working beside about it but unfortunately it turned out to be rice noodles.

The ancient courtyard house behind the archway

was the Hanbao House, one of the most famous printing houses in Sibao in the late Qing Dynasty. But after I visited all the rooms, I felt disappointed because locals had been living here. Messy wood, hav, and other sundries were scattered around the courtyards, hiding its original look. Only from the side chamber can one see a little of the old workshop's original flavour. Over each door hang wooden boards which read 'carving blocks', 'printing' and 'binding', which basically shows that this used to be an important place for printing books.

However, it seems that the local government doesn't care much about these precious cultural remains because it doesn't bring any profit to the town. In fact, economic profit shouldn't be the standard to judge the value of cultural remains, since they are priceless to begin with. If we don't protect them, some day we will regret it very much.

The block printing industry in Sibao had a glorious history in Hakka territory. It can be said that wherever the Hakkas went, they never forgot how important books were. And this belief encouraged the printing industry to grow and made it one of the four biggest bases of block printing in China during the Ming and Qing dynasties, the other three being Beijing, Wuhan in Hubei Province and Jiangxi Province.

- 1. Sibao in Liancheng was one of the four bases of the block printing industry in China during the Ming and Qing dynasties. This is the site of the Hanbao House.
- 2. The Wuben Hall in the village of Peitian.
- 3. There is a huge volume of ancient book in the courtyard of the Sibao Block Printing Museum.
- 4. Hakkas paid a lot of attention to knowledge and honour, which stimulated the development of the printing industry in Sibao.
- 5. The entire Hanbao House has become a local residence.

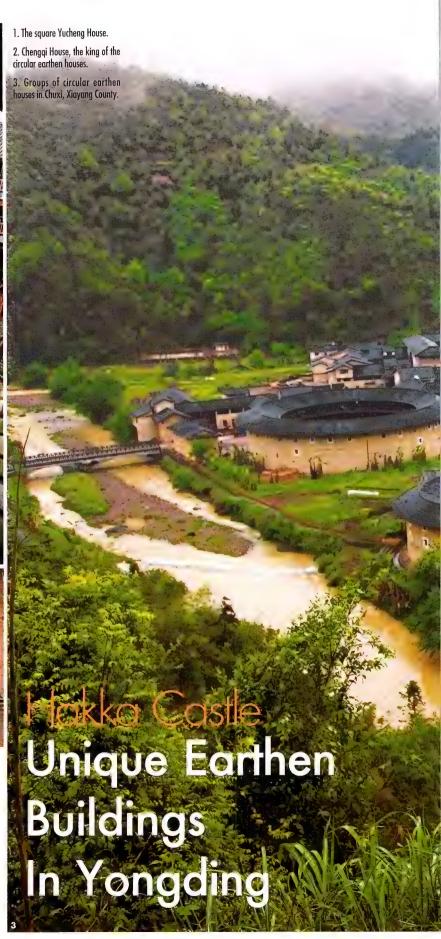


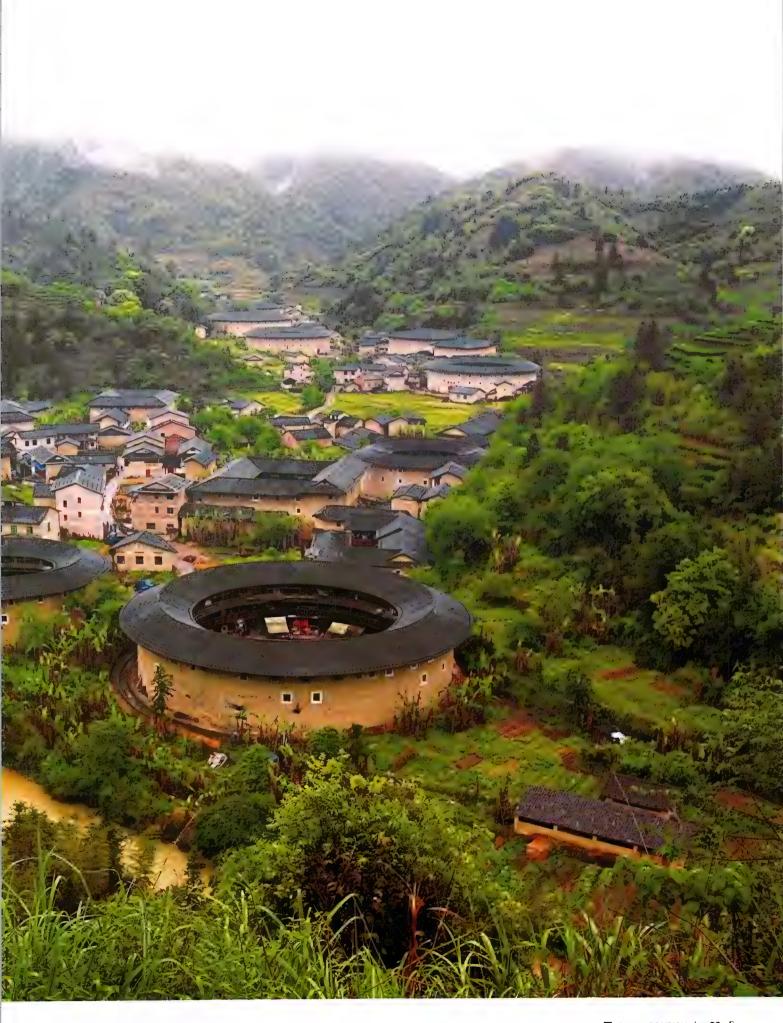


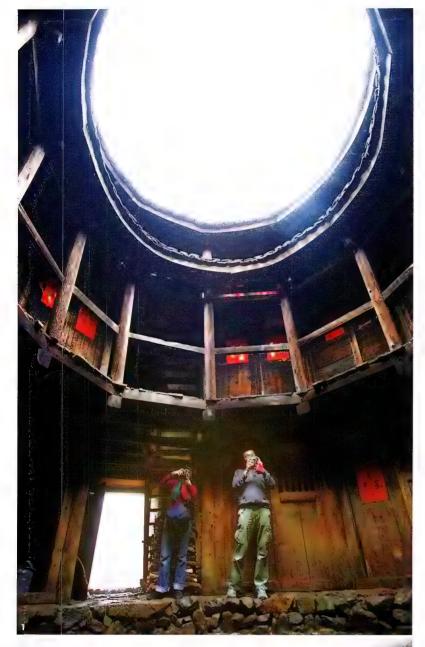


After leaving Liancheng, I went to Shanghang along a branch of the Tingjiang River and stayed in a hotel near the bank of the river for a night. The next day, I continued going southeast at lunchtime. It was drizzling, so I hopped on a bus and rode down the muddy road. At around 5 pm, I arrived at Yongding county.

I got off the bus at the bus station and was instantly surrounded by a swarm of taxi drivers who all wanted to take me to the earthenen buildings. Apparently tourism in Yongding has been well developed. I









chose one honest driver and left there right away. On our way, I asked my driver why there weren't any similar earthen buildings in the county proper. It would be much better if the traditional buildings have been preserved there. The driver said no one had thought about it, instead, everyone was trying to copy the 'modern' structure. Today's county proper is no longer the same as what it was ten years ago.

#### Reviving the Old for the UN Inspection

In no time, we arrived at Hukeng town. The driver asked me where I would stay, to which I responded 'a traditional earthen building, of course'. He drove me to the Zhenfu House about two km away from Hukeng. Unfortunately, it was under renovation, so I couldn't stay. I saw many pavilions and bamboo bridges, which looked like any garden in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province. A waitress told me that these structures would be torn down soon because the government ordered the removal of everything that was not an original structure.

The owner of the House told me that all circular-structured hotels were closed for renovation. The next morning, regardless of the heavy rain, I went to the Chengqi House which was reputed to be the 'king of circular earthen buildings'. This huge circular building covers an area of 6,000 sq m and is 14.3 m tall, with four stories and 402 rooms. It can accommodate 80 families to a maximum of around 600 people. There were some 50 families with at least 360 residents when I was there.

A tourist told me excitedly, 'the UN will soon send people to inspect the earthen buildings. This is going to be a world cultural heritage! Look, those new modern buildings have all been changed back into the traditional ones. The government spent a substantial amount of money on this.'

Finally, I understood it all. The reason why I couldn't stay in the traditional earthen house and why the newly built garden would be torn down was because they were declaring it a 'World Cultural Heritage'.

#### Unique Earthen Buildings Hidden in Deep

At dinner, I met a female reporter, Maria, from a Portuguese newspaper in Beijing who had come here for vacation. She was amazed with the different types of earthen houses hidden deep in mountains and believed these structures had a close connection with Hakkas' life. I told her that like the Hakkas left their homeland and settled down in a new place, would definitely stick together and pay a lot of attention safety. This round enclosed structure is a testament to their traditional life style. We chatted late that night. Before we went our separate ways, we decided to save money and jointly rent a car to go to Xiamen.

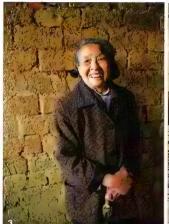
The next morning, it was still raining. My stay in

Yongding was too short. There were still so many earthen houses that I hadn't seen. The driver said even if I had stayed for a month I still wouldn't have been able to see half of them, because first, there were too many of them; second they were sparsely scattered; and third they were hidden deep in mountains and the road was hard to walk. It is possible that someone might come and not even be able to see one at all.

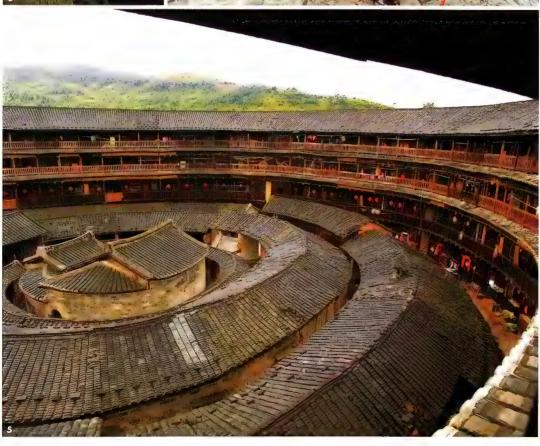
We convinced the driver to take a short cut to see two earthen houses. After going up over several high mountains, we stopped at a dangerous turn. The driver asked us to get out of the car and look out over the base of the mountain. As the clouds dispersed, a unique crescent-shaped house emerged on the mountainside. Then we continued towards Xinluo

Village. The driver took us to a green bamboo forest where I saw a tiny circular house standing in the mist. Stepping into, I could touch the ceiling. The inner diameter was no more than one *zhang* (3.3 m). Each room was about four sq m, having only enough space for one table and one bed. Maria asked the driver excitedly, 'Is this the smallest round house?' He said, 'Yes. Otherwise, why would I bring you here?'

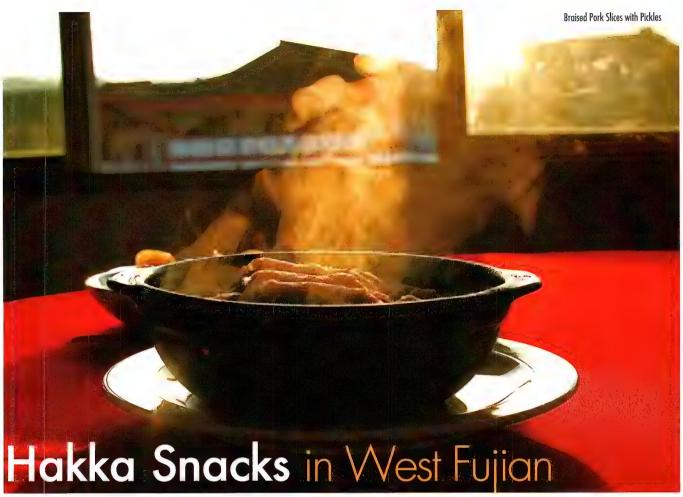
One month after I returned home, I learned that UNESCO would soon send a delegation of specialists to examine the Hakkas' earthen building in Fujian. My trip there allowed me to witness the local people's efforts to protect their culture. I am happy to see that the splendid Hakka culture has finally been recognised by the rest of the world.







- 1. The diameter of the smallest earthen house is no more than 3.3 m
- 2. Newly built modern houses are not in harmony with the traditional earthen houses.
- 3-4. Residents of the earthen houses' residents are mostly elderly people as most young people have all gone to the city to work.
- 5. Earthen houses demonstrate the Chinese people's old belief of 'round Heaven and square Earth'.



Hakkas have been living in western Fujian for more than 1,000 years, but they haven't forgotten about the delicious food and snacks of the central plains (comprising the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River). Influenced by the weather, geological features and local products in south China, Hakkas gradually combined the cuisine of central plains with the western Fujian cuisine and created a unique Hakka-style food. Although sitting next to southern Fujian, eastern Guangdong and Zhujiang Deita areas, Hakka cuisine is very different from that of its neighbouring places. Maybe it's because of the Hakkas' cultural heritage and their living environment.

#### The Best Changting Gourmet Food

Changting, the only county in China that has its own cuisine, is reputed to be the 'homeland of Chinese Hakka Food'. Six snacks in this small county have won the name of 'Famous Chinese Snack' and 34 have won the name of 'Famous Fujian Snack'. The 'White Cut Hetian Chicken' is the No. 1 must-try Hakka dish in Changting. Changting is also the 'land of tofu', and boasts 80 varieties of tofu dishes. Its dry tofu is even more popular.

I'd like to introduce several famous Hakka dishes and snacks in Changting, which you must try while you are there. Famous dishes include Stewed Pork Chunks, White Cut Hetian Chicken, Fried Tofu with Pork Filling and Braised Pork Slices with Pickles. These dishes are served in the restaurants near the Sanyuan Pavilion Square. Changting snacks include Immortals' Jelly, Fried Cake, Tofu Cake, Sugar Cake, Fried Buns, Boiled Pork, Stirfried Rice Noodles, Tofu Balls, Fish Balls, Fried Spring Rolls and Chicken Intestine Noodles. Almost every Hakka family can make these snacks. On the Diantou Ming Qing Dynasties Ancient-style Street, there are several small restaurants in Hakka homes where you can try authentic Hakka snacks in a cosy atmosphere.

# Unique Cuisine of Liancheng, Shanghang and Yongding

In recent years, Liancheng's Sibao Floating Tofu has been listed as one of representative Hakka dishes in western Fujian. This dish is made of tofu blocks stuffed with meat and simmered in chicken soup. It is said that during the Ming and Qing dynasties, the woodblock printing was very prosperous in Sibao. The printing workers who

worked day and night took this tofu dish as their main supply of nutrients.

Shanghang is famous for its 'Shanghang Fish'. It is made of mashed fish meat and fatty pork combined with salt, sweet potato, water chestnut and shallot bulbs.

Typical Hakka dishes in Yongding include

Stewed Dry Bamboo Piths with Fatty Pork, Braised Pork Slices with pickles and Meat Balls. Famous snacks are Duanmu Rolls, Hakka Ground Green Tea, Yongding Taro Buns, Dustpan Rice, Fried Rice Noodles, Bitter Pork Liver and Duck Blood.

Translated by Nichole Ouvana

#### 'Eight Dried Foods of Western Fujian'

Different from the territory to which today's Longyan City belongs, the west of Funjian was formerly called Tingzhou and consisted of eight prefectures. Interestingly, each prefecture had one unique kind of snack food, which came together as the 'eight dried foods of western Fujian'.

Lin Lizeng from Taiwan once commented on Changting dry tofu like this: 'Each tofu block is about six to seven inch (approx. 2.5 cm) in length and the size of a woman's handkerchief. It's thin and has a five-spice flavour. They go perfectly with peanuts and alcohol'. In Changting it is a tradition to give this dry tofu as a gift when visiting friends. Parents usually prepare a lot of it for their children who go to another city or country to study. There are three kinds of Changting dry tofu: five-spice, soy sauce and yellow tofu.

Each county in western Fujian produces dry sweet potato, but Liancheng is famous for its best-tasting sweet potatoes and unique method of production. They first steam the local sweet potatoes and peel them, then press them flat and bake them. The dry sweet potato can be kept for years.

In fact it is made of field mouse. This is not only tasty but also believed to be good for kidneys and effective for overactive bladders and children's bed wetting. The local people usually make and eat dry mouse in winter.

With a history of five to six hundred years,

Shanghang dry radish became popular in the early Ming Dynasty (1368 — 1644). This brand of dry radish's quality is guaranteed because they use the radish produced in Ninghua, which is fresh, sweet, crispy and tender. Previously, Shanghang dry radish was not only popular in Changting, Yongding and Meixian, but also sold to Chaozhou, Shantou and other places throughout the Tingjiang waterway.

Golden coloured and semi-translucent, this is a popular dish.

Winter is the season to make Wuping dry pork liver. Its preparation involves first steaming an entire block of it and then cutting it into thin slices.

This is made of lean beef that is first marinated in soy sauce and spices such as cloves, fennel, cinnamon and sugar. After this, it is preserved for about one week, then dried in a ventilated place and finally, smoked.

There are two kinds of Yongding dry vegetables: sweet-flavoured and sour-flavoured. It is said Yongding dry vegetables have a history of over 400 years. During the Spring Festival every family makes them and eats them all year round.



eet Potato Pancake





#### Tips for Travel in Western Fujian

#### **Transportation**

#### ■ Long-distance:

Plane: there are six round-trip flights from Hong Kong to Xiamen every day.

Train: Shenzhen-Longvan K636 / 637 start (from Shenzhen); 9:17 pm, arrive (at Yongding) 4:51am, arrive (at Longyan) 5:47 am

Longyan → Shenzhen K635 / 638 start (from Longyan) 7:05 am, arrive (at Shenzhen) 3:18 pm

Guanazhou > East-Longvan K297 / 300 start (from Guanazhou East) 7 pm. arrive (at Longyan) 3:34 pm

Longvan Guanazhou East K298 / 299 start (from Longvan) 9:54 pm, arrive (at Guangzhou East) 6:52 am

#### Local Transport:

There are over 20 shuttle buses running between Xiamen and Longyan every day, departing once every 40 minutes.

Longyan → Yongding buses depart every 8 mins

Longyan >Liancheng every 20 mins

Longyan → Shanghang every 25 mins

Longyan Changting every hour; 30 yuan / person; about 4 hours' journey.

There is one direct bus departing from Xiamen Wucun Bus Station to Changting at 6:20 am and 2:20 pm every day. The entire trip takes 6 hours.

Suggestion: it is highly recommended to first take train to Longyan City, then transfer to a bus to Changting, Liancheng or Yongding. It's more convenient to first go to Longyan because there are more than ten tour buses departing from there to other counties in western Fujian.

#### ■ Transport in the County:

Changing Most of its famous attractions are located in the city proper, so you can take a taxi, motorcycle or tricycle to go to any attraction. Tricycles are especially cheap and convenient to get around.

If you want to visit Longmen in the upper reaches of the Tingjiang River, you'd better take a taxi. The round trip is about 150 yuan.

Liancheng Guanzhi Mountain is located in the suburbs. There is a special line minibus to go there. Other options such as motorcycle and taxi are also available. If you want to visit Sibao, you need to take a special line bus at the Liancheng Long Distance Bus Station. It departs every two hours. To visit Peitian Ancient Village, you need to take a shuttle bus to Pengkou outside the Liancheng Bus Station, then transfer to a special line minibus at Penakou to Peitian.

Yongding There are special lines in Yongding county proper that go to every earth house scenic areas. But a taxi will save your time so that you can see more scenic

#### Accommodation

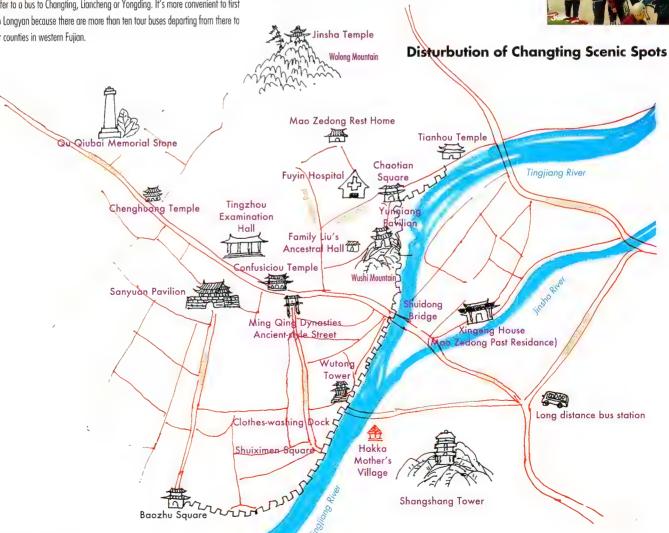
Chanating Hakka Hotel Located in the middle section of Zhaozheng Road, a trunk road in the county proper, the hotel offers rooms ranging from 50 to 220 yuan per night, with nice decor, Tel; (0597) 683 1196

Changting Hotel No. 3 Xiwai Street, Changting. Double-occupancy room cost around 150 yuan per night. Tel: (0597) 683 1524









- 1. The site where Qu Qiubai (1899 — 1935), former general secretary of Chinese Communist Party, died as a martyr.
- 2. The Liu Family's ancestral hall.
- 3. Sanyuan Pavilion.
- 4. Nanchan Temple.
- 5. Xingeng House, where Chairman Mao Zedong and Zhu De (1886 — 1976, a CPC general) once resided.
- 6. Statue of the Hakkas' mother
- 7. Statue of General Yang Chengwu (1914 — 2004).
- 8. Town God Temple of Tingzhou.









Changting Tobacco Grand Hotel No. 25 Huancheng Middle Road, Changting. Double-occupancy room is approximately 120 yuan per night. Tel: (0597) 682 1899
Liancheng Grand Hotel No. 56 Zhongshan Road. Double-occupancy room, about 180 yuan. Tel: (0597) 893 5666

Liancheng Hotel No. 56 Zhongshan Road. Double-occupancy room, about 150 yuan. Tel: (0597) 692 2254

Liancheng Oriental Hotel This hotel is highly recommended to travellers who love photography as it enjoys the advantage of being near the Lianhua Bridge over the Chuan River. If you are lucky enough to get a room on the sixth floor, you'll be assured of a great view over Guanzhi Mountain. The drawback is no elevator. Double-occupancy room costs about 100 yuan per night. Tel: (0597) 893 8331 Peitian Village Farmers' Inn There are many family-style hostels opened by the local farmers. They are usually small houses with old wooden beds. I once stayed at Mr. Wu Jiuqing's home inn. Accommodation was only 30 yuan per night, while three meals were 40. Free homemade yellow wine. Tel: (0597) 838 8843 Yongding County Hotel No. 36 Tiyu Road, Fengcheng. Double-occupancy room, 180 yuan. Tel: (0597)583 2818

Yongding County Forestry Guesthouse No. 193 Huancheng East Road, Fengcheng. Double-occupancy room, 80 yuan. Tel: (0597)583 2305

Earthen Building Farmers' Inn There are many guesthouses outside the earthen buildings scenic spot. Inside the earthen houses you can also find many cheap hostels opened by the residents, only 30 yuan per night. The Fuyu Hotel set inside the Hongkeng Earth House Cultural Village in Yongding is a very good option. Tel: (0597) 553 5800 / 1385959438

#### Shopping

The Eight Dried Foods in Western Fujian are the best choice, which you can

purchase in any county or attraction. However, supermarkets sell them at a much lower price. Besides this, there are Hakka yellow wine, various Chinese medicines, Liancheng fine paper, Changting wood carvings, cultural replicas and souvenirs of 'Changting Revolution and Counter-Revolution'.

#### A Recommended 5-day Tour in West Fujian and South Jiangxi

D1: Hong Kong-Shenzhen-Longyan

Take Train K636 at Shenzhen Train Station at 9:06 pm to Longyan. (Overnight on the train)

D2: Longyan-Zhixi-Peitian

Arrive at Longyan at 5:58 am, take a bus to Zhixi which has a reputation for the Hakkas' 'Great Old Monsions'. Take some pictures of its ancient ancestral hall. Stay at Peitian for the night.

D3: Peitian-Sibao-Liancheng-Guanzhi Mountain

In the morning, take pictures of the special Hakka residential buildings characterised with '9 halls and 18 open wells'. Then head toward Sibao, one of the former four bases of China's printing industry. In the afternoon, visit Guanzhi Mountain. Return to Liancheng and stay ovemight.

D4: Liancheng-Changting

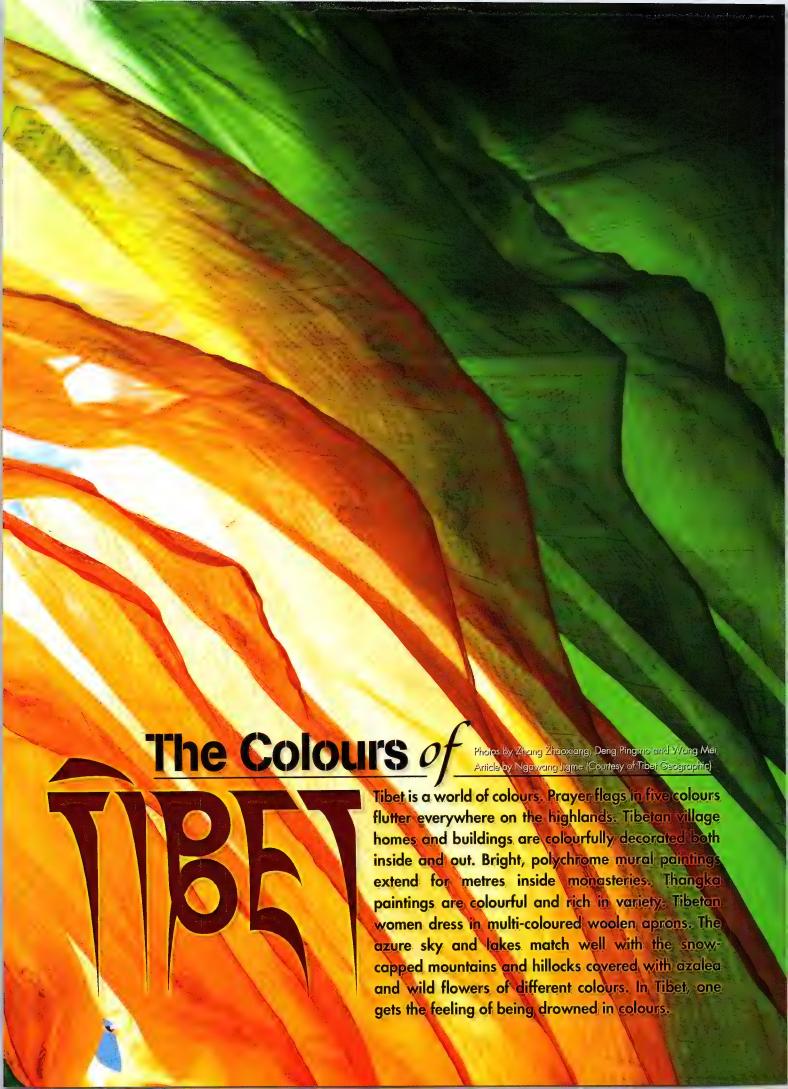
In the morning, head toward Changting from Liancheng. On arrival, take a walking visit around the ancient Hakka town Changting, which is as famous as ancient Fenghuang Town in Hunan Province. Stay at Changting overnight.

D5: Changting-Ganzhou

In the moming, after taking pictures of the Tingjiang River, go to Ganzhou, Jiangxi by bus.

There, visit Yugu Terrace, Jiang Jingguo's Former Residence, Bajing Terrace, Gufu Bridge,
Zhao'er Lane and many other scenic spots. In the evening, return to Shenzhen by taking
Train K115 from Ganzhou. Arrive at Shenzhen at 7:04 am the next moming.











In Tibet 'colour' has a strong connection to many aspects of everyday life and the spirit of the people. It means much to the Tibetans who have lived on this plateau for generations.

Tibetans have a unique sense of colour. Different colours connote different meanings and gradations. Yellow, red, blue, white and green are the five most commonly used and revered colours.

These colours symbolise the five sources of Bon religion, Tibet's indigenous, first religion which later was absorbed by Buddhism: yellow for the earth; red for fire; blue signifies the sky; white stands for clouds; and green for water.

#### Vellow

Yellow in the eyes of Tibetans is a special symbolic colour of religious and monastic things. It is used as the body colour of Buddha Sakyamuni (founder of Buddhism), the living quarters and religious garments of eminent monks and Tulkus, Buddhist ritual utensils, and the statutes of Buddha. Ordinary monks and nuns as well as laymen usually do not dress in yellow. The only exception might occur in the Chinese Zodiac year under which they were born. At that time they may wear a yellow shirt or a yellow waistband on special occasions.

Yellow has abundant symbolic meanings in Tibetan Buddhism. Among the five-coloured prayer flags, it represents a flourishing Buddhist culture as well as the earth. It also represents the middle position in Tibetan Buddhist paintings and the South in Mandala (Buddha's Pure Land) paintings. Of the Five Buddha families of Tibetan Buddhism, Buddha Ratnasambhava (the Dhyani Buddha of the South) is golden yellow in colour. The Gelug Sect (one of the five main lineages) of Tibetan Buddhism uses yellow as its special colour. All the monks of Gelug Sect wear yellow kasayas (robes of Buddhist monks) and hats, and it is therefore known as 'Yellow Hat Sect'. In Tibetan operas, the role wearing a yellow mask always represents an eminent and learned monk.

The yellow colouring used in Tibetan paintings is both mineral-based and plant-based. The mineral powders include orpiment and realgar with the former producing light yellow and the latter orange-yellow. The plant dyestuff is extracted from an evergreen barberry and produces a light yellow colour. However, the golden yellow exclusively used on statues of the Buddha, roofs of temples, Thangka (traditional Buddhist painting of a holy being) and mural paintings, is prepared by skilled gold craftsmen who use a special process to treat and melt pure gold. The result could be gold powder which used to daub on with a brush, or very thin gold foil which can be pasted on the surface of metals and walls.

The gilding technique applied on metal surfaces such as bronze Buddha statues is called 'fire gilding'. In the gilding process, gold powder is first dissolved in mercury and painted on the object's surface. Heat is then applied to stimulate vaporisation of the mercury, following which the gilding is finished.







#### Red

For most Tibetans the colour red is a reminder of the red kasaya. It looks so distinct, mysterious and dignified that onlookers instinctively feel the distance between secular and spiritual worlds. In the theoretical formulas for using colour in the traditional Tibetan paintings, red and orange-red are considered the 'kings' of colour because they 'show an everlasting, unchanging majesty.'

Actually using the colour red for kasayas began in India where Buddhism originated about 2,500 years ago. At that time, red (some say both red and yellow) was considered the cheapest and most ordinary colour. Buddhists used it as their dress colour to show their detachment from this mortal life and their disdain of physical appearance. They wanted to be seen as seeking a more fundamental and noble ethos. They also thought that by dressing in a colour which non-believers considered unstylish, they could free themselves of worldly interference so as to better devote themselves to the service of Buddhism.

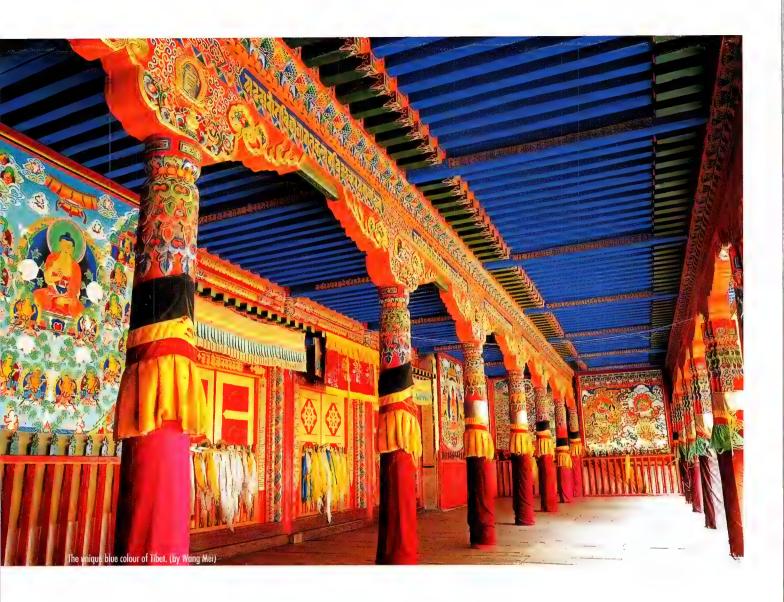
With changes over time, regional configurations and aesthetic values, red gradually was uplifted to the loftiest position and became the monopoly of eminent monasteries and their monks. Today, the ochre red used for the roof area and surrounding walls of Tibetan-style palaces and monasteries is still habitually called 'Lama Red'. This magic colour accordingly has become one of the typical colours highlighting Tibet. Red colour extracted from the Chinese tamarisk plant

also often appears on Mani stones (rocks and slate slabs inscribed with Tibetan Buddhism's syllable or poem) and other religious utensils.

Red has irresistible charm for Tibetan women in the vast rural stretches of farming and pastoral areas. They love to wear a scarlet scarf and a red shirt against the backdrop of open green grassland or farmland. It's an absolute visual enjoyment. Their love of the colour also finds expression in their facial makeup with two eye-catching big red dots on their cheeks.

Tibetan Buddhist paintings use red to indicate a geographical direction. For instance, in Mandala paintings West is presented in red (as the colour of Amitabha, Buddha in the Land of Utmost Happiness). Red now has come to symbolise power in Buddhist culture. The character wearing a dark red mask in Tibetan operas is the King while the light red mask represents the Chief Minister.

Cinnabar in particular is used in traditional Tibetan paintings. This red mineral pigment is rich and bright without being gaudy. It therefore is used widely in Thangka and mural paintings. It even became the primary colour and one of the style indicators of paintings from the Late Development Period (since 978) in Tibetan Buddhism. The traditional red dyestuff often used on kasayas and pulu (Tibetan woolen fabric for clothes and cushions) is the juice extract of fabric comes from the Tibetan madder plant. Chemical dyestuff of course also is imported from India to make kasayas.



#### Blue

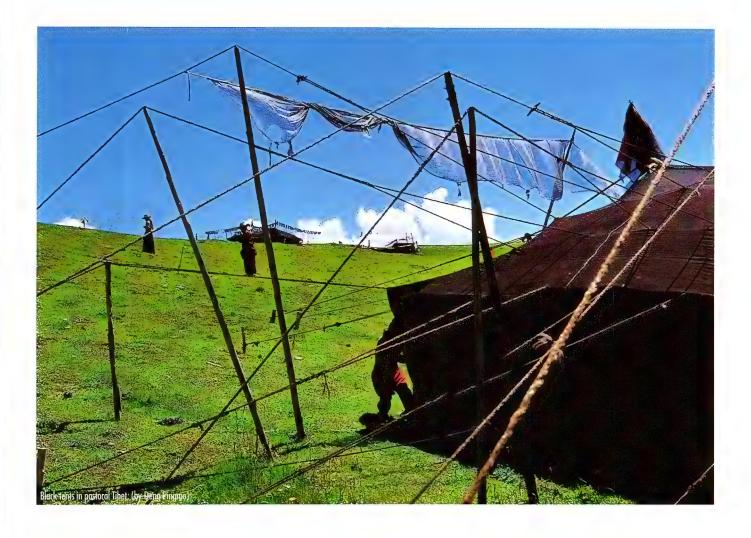
Dark indigo, sometimes called 'Tibet Blue' is the most familiar blue colour used in Tibet. Its symbolic meanings include blue prayer flags representing the sky, the blue Buddha Vairochana (one of the Five Buddha families) who represents the central position in Buddhism, and blue masks in Tibetan opera which are given to hunter roles.

The 'Tibet Blue' has been used in Tibet for about 1,000 years, which comes from malachite, a mineral formed around copper deposits after the primary copper-bearing sulfide becomes oxidised. Malachite is produced in many places across the world, but a study and comparison of products from different regions found that the Tibetan variety produces very distinctive dark indigo because of Tibet's unique climatic and geological conditions. Historical records located in the Tibetan Archives show that Tibet Blue pigment was one of the major local products exported to neighbouring countries and regions several

hundred years ago. It also often was presented to the Imperial Court as tribute or to diplomatic envoys to China as gifts.

In religious Thangka and mural paintings, dark blue is used mainly to depict various Buddhist gods of anger and protective deities who uphold the dharma. Blue can manifest to the maximum extent of the power and awe-inspiring qualities of these gods while at the same time giving them a multi-dimensional persona. This is the artistic effect that distinguishes 'Tibet Blue' from other shades of blue. It also underlines the message in Buddhist culture that blue represents fearsome power.

In daily life, the colour blue is mainly used for clothes, especially on the inner collar and shirtsleeve cuffs of pulu woolens for rural men. In addition, Tibetan-style door curtains and the various auspicious patterns and symbols on the tents used by both rural and urban Tibetans are made with blue cloth to indicate both good luck and fortune.



#### Black

The understanding of black as a colour is a bit complicated. While it is very much an integral and accepted part of the Tibetans' daily lives, at the same time it is closely related to the idea of dark forces.

Most Tibetan herdsmen live in black tents made of thick, tough hair from black yaks, and Tibetan architectural propriety requires both doors and window frames usually to be painted in black. These traditions have different interpretations. One considers that the form of a black yak head can exorcise evil spirits in addition to being decorative while another believes that black simply is helpful in absorbing the heat of intense sunlight. In the countryside both men and women wear black pulu clothes. Conservative rural women never wear white.

Buddhist and Bon artistic tradition uses black (as well as blue) to represent wrathful images of respect and protective deities. In their *Qamo* Dance (also known as *Cham*) and Black Hat Dance, the colour black is prominent in order to portray power and inspire awe. When a newborn Tibetan baby is brought outdoors for the first time or becomes sleepless

and cries all the time, parents usually follow ancient folklore by smearing a black dot on its nose. Tibetans also have the habit of blackening the surface of their household eggs and butter or placing black broadbeans on them before selling or giving them away as gifts. In this way the people believe their vulnerable lives may resist harm and disturbance from evil spirits and avoid loss of fortune. It is a typical psychology of combating poison with poison.

The Tibetans often use white and black to describe positive and negative moral ethics. Black always is related to something negative, evil or illegal. In Tibetan operas, the mask with a black-and-white alternating pattern is worn by someone in a double dealer role.

Black pigment used in traditional Tibetan paintings is hand-made either from the most delicate ash produced by burning Chinese pine or from the lamp wick cinders created in the burning of butter lamps. Into both a little adhesive must be added. The black colour produced by such pigment does not reflect light, and possesses a deep and stable colour.

#### White

The white colour plays a very special role in Tibetan life and its various religious ceremonies. In terms of frequency, it has no rival. This is due to both the native Tibetan culture and the influence of non-native religious practices.

A number of scholars believe that Tibetans began to favour white once Buddhism arrived from India where it long had been held in esteem. Legend has it that Buddha Sakyamuni appeared as a white elephant in his mother's dreams shortly after she became pregnant. There are many religious references associating Buddha Sakyamuni, Buddhism and the colour white. For example, one can point to the white lotus that exemplifies the highest realm of Buddhism, the white Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara and the revered white Buddhist pagoda. On the Tibetan Plateau, however, the white elephant was replaced by a white yak or white horse. Since white yaks are rarely seen, they always have been regarded as a symbol of luck and honour.

Whenever a monk or high-ranking lama receives an invitation, it is customary to send the whitest possible yak or horse for his mount. Escorts wearing white will walk in front of the entourage calling out 'Da-ga, Mi-ga' ('White Man, White Horse'). When ordinary Tibetans dream of a white clothed man and a white horse or by chance happen simply to see a white horse it always is considered a propitious moment.

The most obvious example of Tibet's attachment to white is the giving of 'khata', the white silk scarf of welcome that symbolises goodwill, auspiciousness, compassion and a pure mind. All Tibetans, whether of high social status and senior religious rank or simply ordinary citizens, find the simple white khata to be an indispensable aspect of any ceremony. To Tibetans, white symbolically is set against black and carries a connotation of selflessness, positiveness, kindness, purity and peacefulness. Such notions probably have their origin in early animist beliefs that held Tibet's magnificent white mountains as holy and deserving of worship.

Mandala paintings use white to portray the East while the white Buddha Vajrasattva also represents the East. A white prayer flag symbolises the clouds in the sky, and white masks in Tibetan operas are reserved specifically for male roles.

White also finds its way into other important aspects of Tibetan daily life. Food such as 'tsampa' (a roasted gingke barley flour), milk and butter possess a

distinct white essence, as does pulu cloth made from white wool. With the arrival of Tibetan New Year, each family normally tries to whitewash the outer walls of its house, and older family members don a white shirt with a sun-and-moon pattern on it for good luck in the year ahead. Tibetan pilgrims also habitually pick up occasional white pebbles and white stones to place on mountain passes and Mani stone piles along their pilgrimage routes.

Quality white pigment used in traditional Tibetan paintings is mineral-based and produced from volcanic ash in the Rinbung area of Tibet. It usually will not appear white during the application process but will turn white when totally dry. On the other hand, the white paint used on the outer walls of traditional Tibetan dwellings comes from a white clay base called 'Yangjian White Powder' that is sourced from Yangbajing near Lhasa. When milk is added to the water-powder mixture, the resulting mixture is used once a year to whitewash the outer walls of the Potala Palace complex, major monasteries and pagodas. The addition of milk not only makes the white brighter but it also helps solidify the mixture. The milk is donated by devout Buddhists.

#### Green

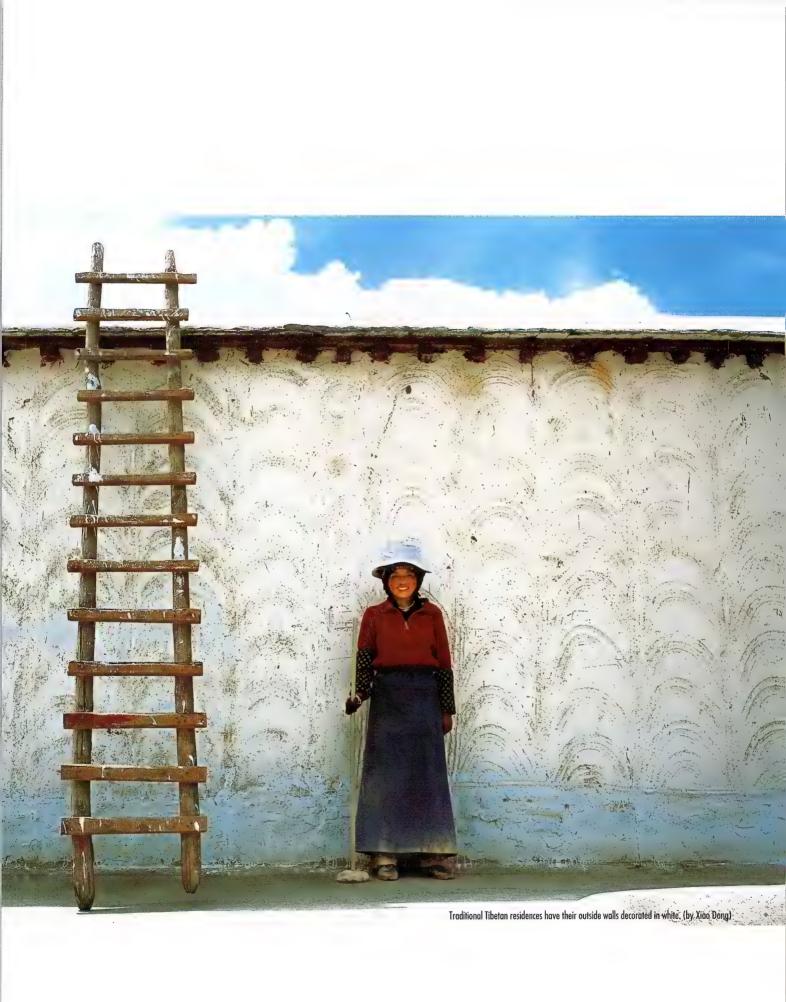
Green seems to be more closely associated with the lives of ordinary people and therefore a very popular colour. Women in the pastoral areas of Tibet often can be seen wearing a green headscarf, turquoise ornaments, a green shirt and an outer robe with green side stripes.

Mandala paintings use green to represent the North, and the green Buddha Amoghasiddhi whose shoulders responsible for people's careers also is symbolic of the North. While green prayer flags are meant to stand for water, a green mask in Tibetan opera is reserved exclusively for female roles. The green pigment used by Tibetan painters is mineral-based and like 'Tibet Blue' is found in copper deposits where oxidation has taken place. Its colour quality also is unique to Tibet.

In summary, life on the roof of the world is a swirl of colour stimulating the collective imagination of Tibetans both physically and spiritually. This constant interplay between colours, majestic scenery and the Tibetan people is destined to extend long into the future.

Translated by Chen Qiuping





# Chenlu -

Photos by Xie Yanwu Article by Xie Yanwu and Cao Zhifeng

# A Pottery Town with a Thousand Years' History



Chenlu is a small town adjoining the Loess Plateau and Guanzhong Plain in northwestern China. The ceramics tradition in Chenlu has been passed down through generations for 1,400 years. The ancient kilns in this town have never stopped burning over that time. Thus, Chenlu has the oldest kilns in the world. In addition to that, Chenlu's craftsmen are still using the primitive manual skills of their ancestors to make pottery. This wins Chenlu the name of 'the living fossil of ancient oriental ceramics'.

It takes less than half an hour drive to the small town of Chenlu from the southeast pass of Tongchuan, north of Xi'an in Shaanxi Province. After an incline then a road winding southeast, Chenlu is right behind a hill.

Chenlu is the most populated and prosperous place in the region. The loess is surrounded by

undulated hills along which are numerous houses, kilns and cave dwellings built with red bricks. Standing in the hundred-metre-long street, we get a panoramic view of the town: the clusters of cave dwellings along the hills with chimneys and kilns dotted among them. This 'display of kilns' is one of the well-known sights of Chenlu.

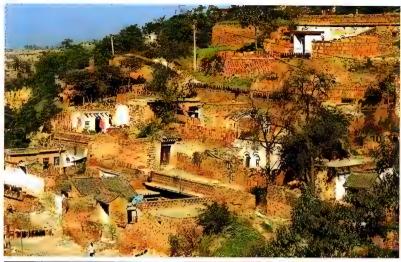
#### A Traditional Manual Ceramic Craft

Almost all the local families in Chenlu are engaged in this traditional profession — pottery-making. All of them deserve to be called ceramicists.

The ancient skills of pottery-making are still widely used in Chenlu. You can walk into any of the local families' courtyards and see for yourself that the craftsmen, intent on their jobs, are still using the methods passed on to them by their grandfathers. In fact they will usually be working on the very same wheel and kiln that their grandfathers used. According to archaeologists, the pottery's wheel probably came into existence in the Neolithic Age. The only difference is that it is now automated with a small electric motor or belt pulley instead of manual power.

As an inland town, Chenlu is short on water resources, but abounds in porcelain clay. For a thousand years, the locals have lived on this clay. The flames that never die out in the kilns shed a bright light on Chenlu's ceramics history.

Chenlu has a great reserve of pottery, with 150 million tons of porcelain clay. Located in the transitional region of north Guanzhong Plain and Loess Plateau, geographically, Chenlu is zoned as sedimentary and abounds in porcelain clay and glaze, as well as mineral resources like coal and limestone. Craftsmen collect clay from the mountain. After a process of smashing, sieving, blending with water and rubbing, the clay is thrown on the potter's wheel. Soon, utensils of varying shapes and sizes are fashioned out of the clay.







- 1. The kiln flames that never die out in Chenlu.
- 2. The efficient use of local resources by the Chenlu people.
- 3. The products of the potter's wheel.
- 4. Day after day, the ancient skills used in the old kilns.





Unlike Jingdezhen (another famous pottery town in China) where each worker has a specialised skill, each family in Chenlu is an independent workshop. Thus, the craftsmen need to be skilled in every aspect, from the very first step of processing raw material to firing the finished models.

#### Three Divisions of Pottery Making

There are three types of kilns in Chenlu, each making different products. The first specialises in making bowls; these are called 'Bowl Kilns'. The typical product of these kilns is the common big-sized bowl called 'Yaozhou big bowl' or simply 'big bowl'. It has a diameter of 25 cm with a capacity of 2.5 kg. Guanzhong residents often use it to serve noodles for guests. Even now in Shaanxi, it is still used to serve rice in restaurants and in the homes of country families. Southerners, who are used to their small-sized bowls, are often taken aback at the sight of this big bowl. On the other hand, Shaanxi people would find the small bowl used elsewhere too inconvenient, saying it is too small to satisfy the appetite.

The second type, called 'Weng Kilns' by the locals, produces big-sized pots and jars. The third are named 'Hei Kilns' (literally, black kilns). These kilns make kettles, vases and so on. It is the most difficult type to operate among the threes, requiring more delicate craftsmanship. In Chenlu, these three divisions are quite independent and those skilled in

each type pass their particular skills down generations. This is known as 'no interference among the threes'.

When products are ready, merchandisers from nearby Fuping County come to purchase the pottery. They hire people to take the pottery downtown by donkeys and then transport the pieces to other parts of the country from Yao County. There used to be a convention that the merchandisers only needed to pay the local craftsmen at the end of a year and the transport was free. If the craftsmen did not have enough money to invest in their pottery-making, those merchandisers would lend some money to them and settle the accounts at the end of the year. Merchandisers then depended totally on people's honour, so contracts were not needed.

#### Walls Piled with Pots will Never Fall

In Chenlu the most valuable thing is the porcelain clay while the most common thing is used pots.

The locals use the handy material, the used 'Xiabo' (a kind of box used to hold baked pottery), to pile up against the walls or fences of their cave dwellings, to strengthen the protective slope of the mountain. In this way, rows of walls piled up with pots and lanes covered with the debris of Xiabo can be seen everywhere in Chenlu.

In pottery firing, Xiabo has many functions, such as protecting the pieces from sticking to one another, sheltering the glazed pots from dust and raising the

- 1. The 'walls of pots' are beautiful sights. The local people use the used Xiabo to build their walls or fences. It is convenient and economical, and saves the use of extra clay.
- 2. If one fills the Justice Cup over the brim, all the wine will leak out from the bottom as a punishment for the drinker's desire for excessive drink.
- Pottery is a specialty of Chenlu.
   You can find pottery in every family home.
- 4. The traditional craftmanship in pottery making is still practiced in this ancient workshop.

efficiency of transporting pottery. Invented in the Tang Dynasty (618 - 907), Xiabo was a great improvement in pottery firing. It won the Yue kilns a reputation at that time and has since been used by all craftsmen in Chenlu.

Used many times, Xiabo may crack and need to be replaced. The experienced craftsmen in Chenlu has found that Xiabo becomes quite light but hard after firing. It is much more durable than bricks and tiles. Besides, as a U-shaped town surrounded by mountains on three sides, Chenlu is a hilly and uneven place. The geographical conditions mean that transportation is inconvenient and expensive. and digging cave dwellings is difficult. Thus, the sieved coarse clay is made into red bricks like fireproof bricks to build cave dwellings and houses. They are durable as well as economical. With its light weight, Xiabo is the ideal material for wallbuilding since the cave dwellings built with red bricks have little capacity for pressure. That is why red walls built with Xiabo and other pots can be seen everywhere in Chenlu. Some families whitewash the walls, creating a snowy colour among all the red. In the same way, chimneys here are also made of the local material such as coarse pottery pipes, uncovered pots or vases or at least the used Xiabo.

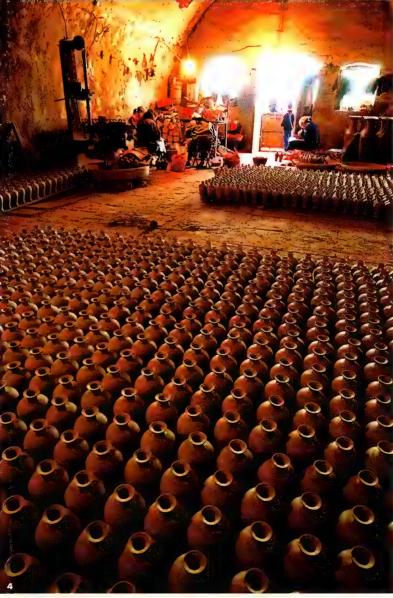
#### The Legend of a National Treasure

As the major producer of pottery in the north, Chenlu's kiln families mainly make pottery for daily use. You can find all kinds of utensils like cups, bowls, jars, dishes, plates and even small lamp saucers. Now, some private kilns are producing more delicate pottery, imitating the traditional Chinese style of ceramics.

Take Li's family for example: after retiring from the Yaozhou Kiln Museum, Mr. Li started his own kilns and specialised in the line of imitating ancient pottery. Li showed us his collection when we visited his home. One of the pieces is a celadon cup with a standing dragon in the middle. It is called 'the Justice Cup'. Li told us that the cup tells if anyone is excessively fond of drinking. The trick lies in the hidden hole at the bottom. If one fills the cup below











1. The Reversed Celadon Teapot, which is widely copied now, is representative of Yaozhou pottery.

2. The used Xiabo or pots can be found everywhere in Chenlu, taking visitors back in time.

the brim, the water will stay in the cup. However, if one fills above the brim, all the wine will leak out from the bottom as a punishment for the drinker. This is why it is given the name 'the Justice Cup'.

In the workshop, some craftswomen have replicas of a famous ancient pottery 'the Reversed Celadon Teapot'. They are carefully carved with professional knives. Next to them is a shelf on which the semi-finished models are placed one by one awaiting baking.

Yaozhou pottery (originated north of Tongchuan City) is famous for its celadon, blossomed in the Song Dynasty (960 — 1279). A farmer uncovered a typical example of Yaozhou pottery, the Reversed Celadon Teapot accidentally in 1968. He found it when digging the field near the town wall in the west suburb of Chenguan Town, Bin County of Shaanxi province. Fourteen years later, it was examined by the experts who declared it was baked in Yaozhou kilns in the Northern Song Dynasty. After that, the Reversed Celadon Teapot was classified as a

national relic for its top quality in style, craftsmanship, and the use of technology. This national treasure has now become the representative celadon of those uncovered Yaozhou pottery relics.

Besides its special style and delicate craftsmanship, this teapot attracts attention with its complicated interior structure and amazing design. It can hold 910 ml of liquid. At the bottom, there is a hole in the shape of a five-petalled Chinese plum blossom. Turning the kettle upside-down, you can pour water in through from the five-petalled hole. When the water poured out of the mouth shows that the kettle is full. Then comes the amazing part: the water will never leak out from the hole when putting the kettle back upright. Therefore, it is named 'The Reversed Celadon Teapot (倒流壺)'. How does this happen? The answer lies in the pipe in the kettle's belly. The pipe is separated from the water inside. As long as the water is not over the upper mouth of the pipe, it won't leak. In the 1990s, people followed the traditional skills and widely copied it in Chenlu and Yaozhou, making it the hottest choice for visitors and collectors.

#### The History of the Pottery Kingdom

In the past, Huangbao Town in Tongchuan City was the centre of all the Yaozhou kilns. The scope of Yaozhou kilns spread to Chenlu, Lidipo, Shangdian, Yuhuagong, Yao County, etc. Tongchuan was called 'Tongguan' in ancient times, and it belonged to Yaozhou in the Song Dynasty. Thus, the kilns in the area were only later called Yaozhou kilns. Generally, when referring to pottery-making in northwestern China, people tend to think Yaozhou as the only producer. Actually, this is not the case. There are well-known kilns like Huangbao's Yaozhou kilns. Although they are now not used, people can still visit the ancient kiln ruins. Chenlu's kilns are the only ones that have never stopped working.

Translated by Huana He

#### **Travel Tips in Chenlu**

Transportation: you can take the Xi'an to Tongchuan bus at the long-distance bus station right in front of Xi'an train station, and get off at Tongchuan South Stop. The price is 10 yuan. After that, you can walk in a northerly direction to Handongkou and take the shuttle bus to Chenlu (No. 207). The ticket costs just 4 yuan per person. Or, you can hire a car. The price is between 20 and 50 yuan, which is negotiable.

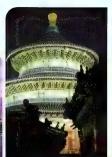
Accommodation: Chenlu has little accommodation. Apart from those private pottery workshops, the kiln families there often receive visitors in small groups. You can negotiate the price with the owners. Also, you can just stay at Tongchuan, where different kinds of hotels can be found.

Buying pottery: you can buy souvenirs in all the kilns for  $10 \sim 10,000$  yuan. The kilns produce different types of pottery. For example, Li's kiln specialises in traditional celadon products, such as the Reversed Celadon Teapot, the cup with three sheep carved on it, the Justice Cup and the plume vase. Xu's kiln produces artistic pottery. Of course there are many other kilns that make products for daily use. You can even try your hand at pottery-making, if you are interested.





















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# The Lacquer Lappers

Deep in the hills every year between April and October, there are lacquer tappers who each tap up to 200 lacquer trees a day, climbing up and down twice, leaving 6–8 cuts on each tree to release its resinous raw lacquer sap. After a mid-day meal in the forest, these workers collect the raw lacquer in buckets, have it weighed and pass on to their supervisor.

Not everyone, however, can tolerate lacquer. Those who are allergic to it will get rashes all over the body, which may lead to infection and take months to cure. When talking about lacquer, some people thus become pale with fright. Sichuanese, seem willing to risk the consequences and seek this job that others are unwilling to do at any price.

Most lacquer tappers come from parts of Sichuan such as Mianyang and Mianzhu. They often boast of their several generations of family who have been engaged in this profession. When April arrives every year, contractors in Sichuan begin to go door-to-door recruiting tappers. Some of those hired will head south to Yunnan or Guizhou province while others may go north to Henan, Shaanxi or perhaps Shandong province. To attract people for this hard job, those doing the recruitment often need to offer special incentives.

The next step is for the contractor to sign official agreements with local tree plantations for setting the plantation's management fee per kilogram of raw lacquer. Field supervisors are then appointed and sent to take charge directly of the tappers. These field supervisors undertake responsibility for providing the workers with all daily necessities including food, clothing, accommodation, even their alcoholic drinks and hair-cuts.

The tappers are required to hand over their lacquer to the supervisors at a price of 14 yuan per kilogram. The supervisors then pass it up the chain-of-command to the contractors for about 20 yuan per kilogram. These contractors in turn supply various purchasing houses in Xi'an (Shaanxi Province) with the price rising to over 50 yuan per kilogram. Finally, most of the raw lacquer is exported to Japan where it is processed and refined into high quality paint for cars and ships. Naturally if China itself requires this end product, it then must spend foreign exchange to import it back from Japan.

#### 200 Lacquer Trees for Each Tapper:

Duan Qicai, a 23 year-old Sichuanese, gets up at 3 am every morning to prepare his food, and then sets out at 4 am when it is still dark because the trees tend to produce more sap in the early morning. He needs to walk through the 1,400-metre-high hills for 5 kilometres to get to his working station. During the day, each harvester is responsible for almost 200 lacquer trees climbing each twice and carving 6-8 horizontal cuts in each tree to facilitate the flow of raw lacquer. In the afternoon the tappers collect the lacquer in buckets, weigh it, and then at 6 pm when their labour is finished, they hand the results of the day's work to their supervisor. The trees then require ten days before they can be tapped again. Lacquer tappers thus work the same tree only once out of every ten days until October.

This year Duan arrived together with 9 other fellow workers at Baiyun Mountain in Henan Province. Their first task was to cut branches to build the framework for two shelters which they then covered with plastic sheets. The shelters were located near running water and each could accommodate 4–6 workers. This was where they would live during the next six months. Once a deal is struck between their contractor and a tree plantation, the tappers begin their work.

Occasionally the tappers would collect wild mushrooms or try to catch frogs in attempt to improve their diet. Unfortunately, however, two workers almost lost their lives because the mushrooms turned out to be poisonous, and another worker was bitten by a poisonous snake.

Trees that have never been cut before can produce almost half a kilogram of lacquer the first time. They are called 'kaidao' (first-cut) trees. By its fifth year, a tree may have been cut more than ten times which means it can only produce 0.05 kilogram of lacquer. Most of the trees will die after 6 years of continuous tapping in this fashion. Usually, an elder than 10-year-old tree can only produce a total of 2 or 3 kilograms of raw lacquer before it dies.

By the end of October, the lacquer tappers will have finished their job, all-packed and returned home, perhaps wondering where they will be sent next year.



They say however that once they have children of their own, they will never let them do this same sort of work.

According to the local custom in Henan Province, only 36 cuts are allowed for each row of trees and a maximum of 7 cuts are permitted per individual tree during the harvest season. The way Henanese tappers cut a tree also is quite different from the Sichuanese. Local Henanese will cut just one side of a tree this year and the other side next year so that the tree will have time to recover after three years. This is an efficient way to protect their lacquer trees.

There is a local Henan folktale that explains the origin of this protective method. Long ago in Lushan County, a 100 year-old lacquer tree in the hills could not stand the pain of being cut everyday. It therefore appeared in the dreams of its human tormentor, requesting that the tappers immediately promise to stop his cruel way of cutting. In return, the tree agreed to produce for him one full bucket of raw lacquer. The next day, the lacquer harvester made only one cut across the tree's ancient bark, and lo and behold, the old tree really releases a full bucket of lacquer. Thereafter the man always kept his promise. This tale is widely known among the lacquer tappers in Henan, and to this day it has become a rule that is

- 1. The tappers climb up the same tree twice a day collecting raw lacquer.
- 2. The hand of a lacquer harvester. In the process of collecting lacquer, those with skin allergy will develop rashes on the hands and even over the whole body. It's not an easy job.
- 3. During the harvest period, the tappers live simple and reclusive lives deep in the hills.







strictly followed in their profession.

Sichuanese, on the other hand, habitually cut the tree trunk in a full circle pattern. This completely severs the xylem and phloem arteries of the tree cutting off circulation from the roots up and branches down. Though more lacquer will flow the first few times, the life span of the lacquer tree will be shortened to 2–3 years. This is why Sichuanese tappers are not particularly welcome in the Baiyun Mountain region.

#### One's Own Well-painted Coffin

Another distinctive difference between Henanese and Sichuanese tappers is that the locals keep the collected lacquer for their own use while the Sichuanese sell it elsewhere to make money. Local Henan villagers use the raw lacquer to paint the coffins of their family members. A coffin made of good wood will require 5–25 kilograms of lacquer. Since raw lacquer creates a hermetic seal, the coffin wood can last up to a hundred years in the earth without rotting. This is important to the local people for whom the preservation of the body after death is a serious concern. A well-known story in the district describes

one tapper who applied 25 kilograms of lacquer (at over 25 yuan per kilo) just to paint his own casket.

#### Mysterious Sacrificial Rites to Thank the Mountain God

At the end of the 9th lunar month (approximately mid-to-late October), all the lacquer tappers will pack their possessions and get together one last time to hold a sacrificial offering before returning to their distant homes. They will buy a chicken, a duck, a fish and incense to place on a small, self-built earthen shrine. Burning the incense and setting off fireworks, they will complete the sacrificial rites thanking the Mountain God for His protection and blessings. It is only after this ceremony that they leave with their belongings and lacquer.

Other unwritten traditions play an important role in the lives of the local lacquer tappers. While tapping, there can be no killing of any animals living in the surrounding hills and mountains. Things like boasting, talking nonsense and lying are also considered taboo.

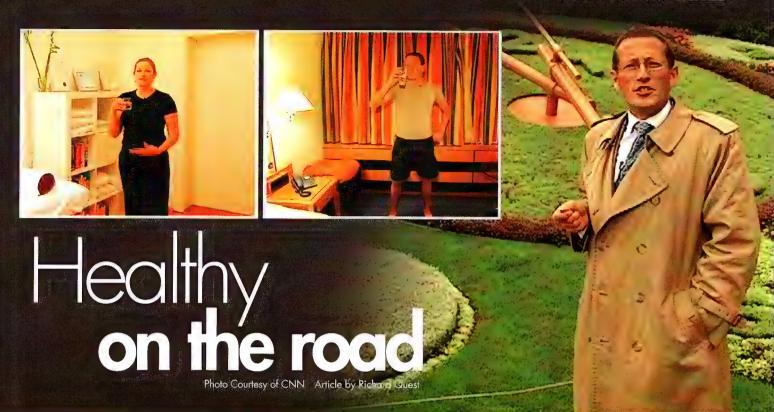
Translated by Huang He

#### Lacquer Tree Facts

With the exception of Northeast China, Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang, the lacquer tree (*Toxicadendron vemicifluum*) is a species found in most provinces of the country. It can grow to 10–20 metres in height and live for over a decade. Cut its bark and it will produce a milky white sap substance that is raw lacquer. Furniture coated with raw lacquer becomes both insect- and damp-proof and produces a glorious, natural sheen and luster. Back in the days before chemical-based paints, this was the main way to decorate and protect furniture. Moreover in its upgraded, highly refined forms, lacquer can even be used to paint cars and ships.

- Weighing the collected lacquer is the happiest time of the day.
- 2. Painted with lacquer, a coffin may last for a hundred years.
- 3. Observing the Mountain God and praying for His blessings.





Just ask any armchair expert and they will gleefully tell us that our travelling life is simply not good for us. Either because we are eating badly while on the run, permanently zonked out from crossing times zones, or, they will hint darkly, putting on too much weight from those business dinners entertaining clients in exotic locations. So, lately I have been trying to do something about it.

'Making myself feel better' starts right at the beginning of the day. It is as simple as a glass of water to start things off. Sorry — I bet you thought I was going to suggest some carrot, celery, and herbal infused concoction to soar your spirits. But all the experts tell me that the best thing you can do when you get up is drink a glass of water. It is a lubricant for the organs and basically kick-starts them back to work. Then, with your 'bits' all running, you can start to move around.

I have never been able to drag my bones out of bed and hoof it off to the hotel gym. So instead of being one of the tiresome travellers who will bounce to the gym and heave weights, I have been advised to do a few gentle stretches.

Diligently stretching out the parts of the body that I am going to rely on in the hours

ahead will work wonders. I asked one expert how to do this and she came up with a ten-minute workout plan that I can do in my hotel bedroom (you can see the workout at http://edition.cnn.com/2007/TRAVEL/09/19/wellbeing.road/).

The idea is to stretch those parts of the body that will tighten up during the day when stress starts to take its toll. So concentrate on the neck, the shoulders and the lower back. All of this is done either sitting on a stool, or pulling myself against the washbasin in the bathroom. And the best bit? It can be done in the privacy of your bedroom while you watch the morning news.

When it comes to eating, I try to remember the old rule: 'rubbish in, rubbish out.' What I eat is the fuel which will keep me moving for the next 18 hours. That doesn't mean I have to do without that delicious sugary thing at breakfast, but it does mean I have to ensure I eat properly.

I always make sure I eat breakfast. Even if it means getting up 15 minutes earlier to get downstairs and have a proper meal. It is lunch that I can usually miss on the way.

The biggest eating problem, I find, is the business dinner. It is usually heavy, usually late and usually I am obliged to 'do the

menu justice.' There is no point in being taken to a five star restaurant if all I eat is the consommé and a bit of light fish followed by an ice cream. (There have to be some perks to this job!)

So when eating the 'big dinner', I try to find something to do afterwards that will help me digest. If I am in a lovely seaside town or city with a great city centre, I will almost certainly 'promenade' after dinner. A good stroll, perhaps with a fine cigar (well, we are allowed a little naughtiness every now and then) will help my digestion magnificently.

So, there are those travellers who are determined to be fit and ridiculously healthy (one of which I am not) and those of us who are trying to ensure that life-on-the-road doesn't mean coming home in a box! I would like to be here first and I'll settle for living the life' of the second! See you in the gym...

Richard Quest is a CNN anchor and correspondent based in London. He also hosts half-hour program 'CNN Business Traveller' every month. For more program details and schedule go to www.cnn.com/businesstraveller

# The Demise of

The Site of Niya Kingdom ruins, rarely heard of or visited by tourists, is located in Minfeng County, Hetian Prefecture, in Western China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. It is located on the northern ridges of the Kunlun Mountains as well as southern end of the Taklamakan Desert – a much more strategic position than the more famous Ruins of Loulan Kingdom. Its inaccessible location has kept many brave explorers out. The Ruins of Niya Kingdom is still well preserved. The site seems to have been suddenly abandoned one day, the reasons for this is still a mystery. Only the lost Kharosthi language can tell.

To be more specific, the Ruins of the Niya Kingdom lie in the desert north of Kayike Village of Damazha in Minfeng County. Minfeng extends 451 km from north to south and 130 km from east to west, a total area of 56,000 sq km. With the southern part higher than the north, it consists of beautiful mountains, valleys, prairies, plains, and Gobi desert.

#### The Discovery of Ruins of Niya Kingdom

In 1901, British-Hungarian Marc Aurel Stein (1862 — 1943) discovered the ancient state of Niya. Returning to Europe, he brought with him some exquisite earthern wares, woven clothes, wood carvings and wooden blocks embossed with unknown languages to Europe. Europeans were astonished at such a brilliant culture found



in the desert.

After the Eastern Han dynasty (25 — 220), Loulan Kingdom was merged into a Jingjue Kingdom and they rose as an important core of southern Xinjiang, neighbouring the Yutian Kingdom. Later in the Tang dynasty (618 — 907), Jingjue Kingdom fell and became part of the Yutian Kingdom, which was later known as 'Niya'.

Meaning 'a remote place' in the Uygur language, 'Niya' was once a quiet oasis in far west China.

The relics in Niya's ruins can be classified into seven categories: residences, graveyards, religious buildings, remains of handicraft and agricultural industries, city site and bridges. If all the items are counted, there are more than 170 of them. Niya is the world's largest ruins of a city built on a wooden structure. Known as the 'Pompeii of the Orient', it plays an important role in the study of the history of the ancient Western Region and Silk Road.



Like the Maya and Pompeii culture, Niya has become a 'black hole' of human civilization history. There are no indications of any disasters such as fire or wars to cause the disappearance of Niya people. And no one can understand why the Niya area enshrined so many Gods and used the lost Kharosthi language.

#### Disclosure of Two Wooden Blocks

In January 1901, Stein reached the ruins of Niya. One day, his camel rider found two wooden blocks carved with words. Stein was mesmerized by these findings, although not yet decoded the language read much like that used by the Kushan Empire located in northern India. The wooden blocks were found on the route to the Islamic mausoleum. In autumn and winter, pilgrims from the oasis of the Tarim Basin started their pilgrimage to

- Lying quietly in the desert, the Ruins of Niya hold well-preserved residences whose pillars stand like ship mosts.
- 2. An image rarely seen these days the camel caravan with camel bells, moves through the broad desert.
- 3. Uncle Kurban is the last generation of camel riders. He claims that the camels of his grandfather were hired by British-Hungarian explorer Marc Aurel Stein.





pay homage to their gods. Stein decided to follow them and explore the ruins of Niya Kingdom.

Niya at that time seemed to like an ancient oasis falling into deep sleep. Remains of residences, government houses, poultry gates, water pools, Buddhist stupas, grapeyards, fruit trees, and fields were found still in order. However, there were no people. Stein found a room full of data left from the Loulan Kingdom period contained in many untouched, sealed and inscribed wooden tablets. The words inscribed on them were in

Kharosthi language. The few hundred wooden tablets outnumbered all previously found ones in the area and proved the history of Jingjue and Loulan kingdoms. After that, Stein conducted three more studies at the site in 1906, 1913 and 1931 respectively and recorded 41 ruin sites.

#### Where Chinese and Western Cultures Meet

Though a small country, the Jingjue Kingdom was built on the major route of the Silk Road, where merchants from both East and West met. Niya, which appeared later was a fusion of culture: Gandhara-style Buddhist stupas and paintings, wooden tablets inscribed with Kharosthi language brought from northern India, Oriental wooden slips and silk were all found — an indication of high economic and cultural standards. Academics denote this as 'Niya civilization'.

The Gandhara culture was highlighted in the Ruins of Niya. Found in the central area of the ruins is a a Buddhist stupa of eight metres high built of earth and in the shape of a circular top and square foundation, just like an inverted bowl. The Gandhara influence could also be noticed from many frescoes, furniture, and doorframes discovered in the residences.

Gandhara was once a province in the prime period of the ancient Persian Empire. Gandhara art was a composition of ancient Greek and Indian art. Its content was mostly related to Buddhism.

Claimed as 'ancient documents of desert', approximately 800 of them, written in Kharosthi language, were found in the ruins of Loulan and Niya kingdoms. Almost 90 % were found in Niya. Most of these documents have been interpreted while the rest are under study. This will be a milestone to understand the thousand-year mystery of the disappearance of Niya Kingdom.

#### Kharosthi, the 'Dead Language'

Kharosthi language these days means the documentary files held, not a language being used. It was first used in northwestern India in the Third Century B.C., in which it mostly appeared on wooden blocks cut in a fan-shape, square-shape or rectangular shape. The contents were related to announcements, orders, writing to or from solicitors or replies of Emperors or rulers. But the use of Kharosthi language ended with the downfall of the Kushan Empire in the 17th century and became a dead language which nobody knew how to read.

On 11 Oct 1995, the Sino-Japanese Joint Exploration Team conducted its seventh exploration





in Niya. This time, they had unearthed an extremely rare colourful Han-dynasty arm guard garment. From the unique inscriptions and patterns the item was soon listed as a relic of national importance and regarded as one of top ten archaeological discoveries in China.

With more translation of the Kharosthi anguage, we are able to picture the living conditions of the people in ancient Niya by connecting information from scattered documents, records and histories. 'The First Bridge of Western Regions' is one of the premier cultural landscapes in the locale. When the melted glacier water from the Niya River flowed to the Jingjue Empire, the locals climbed to the bridge's head and paid tribute to the Bhadra God (a servant of the Sakyamumi) by killing a cow. There was a guard on duty at the head of bridge. In fact, this bridge was built on the borderline between Loulan and Yutian empires. The customs inspection on the bridge was the most important function in the oasis. People working at the customs post had to pay attention to the clarity of river water and its capacity besides collecting tax and paying tribute to gods. The clarity and capacity of the river would be a hint of the harvest in the coming year. The tax collected provided an important income for the public in Jingjue kingdom.

#### **Opinions About the Fall of Niya Civilization**

About 3,000 years ago, the Niya people started living in the oasis or hinterland in the desert. They made a life by developing agriculture,

- Snow-white human bones exposed in the earthen sand may have unusual stories behind them.
- 2. Similar in architectural style, structure and materials, this ordinary residence of today shows little difference to those built a thousand years ago.
- 3. The writer explores the Ruins of Niya with a tractor in November 2006.
- 4. The 10-metre tall Tiying Buddhist Pagoda is located 200 metres south of the Xiayangtake Ancient City.

2. Local Muslims devoted to their religion have four 'naimazi' (prayers) in a day. When the specific time arrives, drivers will even stop their cars and pray by the side of the road.

3. Another fantastic sighting of Huyang Poplars Forests at sunset.

herding, hunting, smelting, architecture, spinning and weaving industries. A thousand years later in the Han dynasty, the Niya people had formed the basic social system of the Jingjue kingdom, the Niya culture had entered its heyday. It had become a crucial political area among the 36 states on the Silk Road in West China. That silk originated from Central China and represented one's wealth and social status.

However the climate deteriorated slowly around Niya, and steadily turned worse until the Tang dynasty (618 — 907). Wars and increasing ruins had resulted in the shrinking of the Silk Road trading. Early in the fourth century, the Niya people appeared to die out in the wild desert.

From ten various items collected in the ruins of Niya, archaeologists conducted an analysis and concluded that the Niya civilization perished in the early Fourth Century. This was more than 1,600 years before the end of the Jingjue Kingdom and this has caused many academic arguments.

How did the Niya Kingdom die out? There are many unanswered questions about this place and the demise of the Niya people.

A foreign meteorologist suggested, after exploring the ancient oasis in Tarim Basin in Xinjiang, that if there are people living in an oasis, the place would likely suffer desertification after 200 years. People must be forced to look for another oasis to reside. However, there must be some other irresistible disasters which caused the Niya people to move from their home in a short period such as wars, earthquakes, windstorms or pestilence.





One of the possible factors is war. From the unearthed wooden tablets we know that the Jingjue Kingdom had been threatened and invaded by the stronger Supis for a long time.

But there are no historic records about the Supis, which leaves more questions and when explorers discovered the ruins of Niya, they were well preserved, with no hint of war. In one chamber of the ruins, many documents and tablets appeared to have been thrown in hastily as if there was not enough time to transport them away. This indicates that the demise of the Niya civilization happened in a moment.

After the disappearance of Niya civilization, the area of its ruins retreated more than 100 km to Minfeng county seat and the Niya River has shortened by more than 40 km. Most residents now living in the Kayike Village located close to the Ruins of Niya believe that they are the descendents of the Niya people.

Once a brilliant kingdom, Niya perished so suddenly and has left the world with an intriguing mystery.

Translated by Yuki Rouge



#### **Travel Tips**

#### Two Routes to Minfeng County:

- 1. One may take an evening flight from Urumqi to Hetian which departs everyday. It takes about 3 hours from Hetian to Minfeng County located 300 km away.
- 2. One can also fly from Urumqi to Kurla and hire a jeep to take you to Minfeng County. Following this 800 km route between Kurla and Minfeng you will travel on the world's longest desert highway (total length 552 km) through the Taklamakan Desert which offers a feast of desert life for your eyes.

#### **Important Contacts:**

#### Hetian domestic flight ticket

Location: 3 Urumqi Road South

Inquiry: (903) 251 2178

#### **Hetian International Travel Service**

Location: 23 Tangabaki Road Hetian City

Tel: (903) 251 6090

#### Hetian Region Travel Quality Centre

Location: 3 Tamubage Road West Complaints: (903) 202 3846, 202 3848

#### Minfeng County Tourism Bureau

Location: 3/F Government Building

Tel: (903) 675 2688

#### Leading Hotels in Minfeng:

#### Niya Gongyu

Tel: (903) 675 2550

Add: 5 Boston RdBaorui Hotel

Tel: (903) 675 1479

Add: 32 Boston Rd

Oasis Hotel

Tel: (903) 675 2999

Add: 14 Bostan Rd

Chunshun Hotel

Tel: (903) 675 2788

Add: 7 Suoda Rd

#### Points to Note when Exploring the Ruins of Niya:

- 1. The Ruins of Niya are located in the desert 120 km north of the Minfeng county seat. The approximately 80km-long road leading from the county seat to Kayike Village neighbouring Niya is an asphalt desert road.
- Kayike Village is a Uygur Village. Three kilometres north of the village is a huge mazha known as Damazha Village. Another 20 km north from Damazha Village is the Niya Ruins reservation area.
- 3. There is only one land road leading from Damazha Village to the Ruins of Niya. But the 'road' is actually a series of sand dunes and earthen hills. To ensure a safe journey, it is recommended that travellers hire a 'Benz' (Yaonimoke), a local vehicle especially designed for use in the desert.

Riding a camel is another option of course, but will take as long as 3 days for a return trip.

- 4. Make Kayike Village of Damazha your base and set off for the ruins in the early morning and return in the evening. The Buddhist pagoda in Niya can be used as a campsite. Return to Minfeng county seat in the next morning.
- 5. Bring your own water as there is none in Damazha Village or the ruins. Also carry instant noodles, dried food and mineral water and the usual items needed for isolated travel. For camping, also bring some cooking utensils. Lamb can be purchased in the village to add to your provisions.
- 6. Autumn is usually the best season to visit Niya. Tourists can expect a windy spring, a hot summer and a cold winter
- 7. Be advised that all visitors to Niya must pay 'reservation fees' to the local reservation management unit to obtain a permit to visit the ruins.
- 8. One can also consider paying a visit to the unique Damazha Village.

#### Climate of Niya Area:

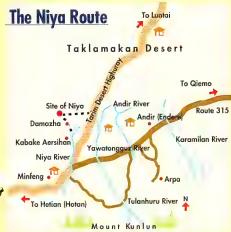
Minfeng County is located in an area with a continental dry climate in a temperate zone. Having an average temperature of 11.2°C, its land temperature can be over 50°C in summer. It is around -5°C in daytime in winter, while at night it may drop sharply to -30°C. The best period to explore Taklamakan Desert is from October to April, since sandstorms rarely occur in these months, with April and May being the windy seasons. Wintertime provides the best trekking season in and around Niya, with the temperature about -5°C in daytime and falling to 15-30°C at night.

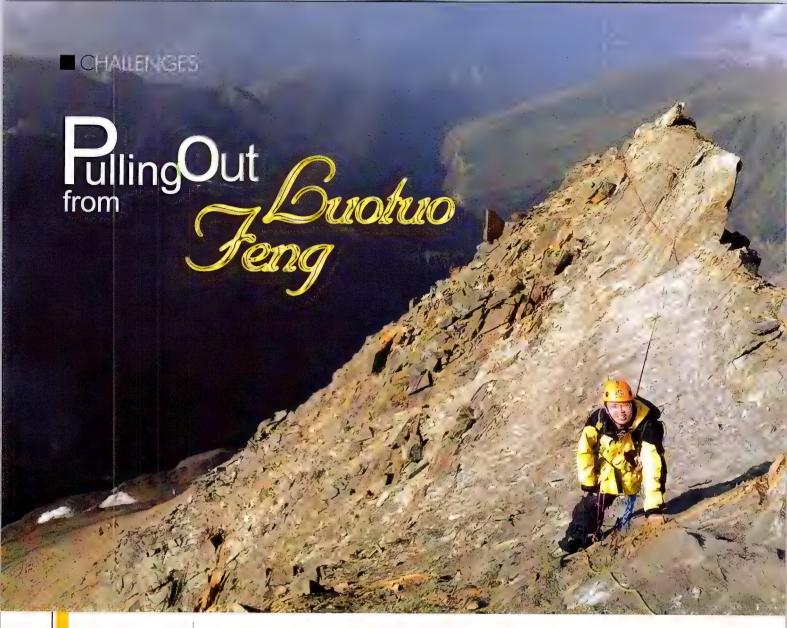
#### Trekking Route to Niya:

I would suggest following the 'Stein Route' — use the Kayike Village as the 'entrance' linking Minfeng county seat and the Ruins of Niya, then trek northward following the historic river bed of the Niya River and enter the ruins using transport such as a tractor, desert jeep or camel. The route

provides a secure journey and travelers can easily find support from the village. However, some explorers in search of more extreme routes may consider this as just too reserved and conventional!







It was early May in Deqin, Yunnan. In a serious avalanche accident on the Tibet's sacred snowy Meili Mountain, more than 10 trekkers were lost, presumed dead. Although people experience a sense of awe and charm at this mysterious and stunning snowy mountain, one after another wistful story of mountain climbers seem to warn us: some mountains you can conquer, others are better for viewing from afar.

Photos & Article by Shan Ma

#### Locals call the mountain evil

Luotuo Feng (Camel Peak) is situated at the junction of Rilong of Xiaojin county, Changping Gulley and Bipeng Gulley in Sichuan. It is composed of two peaks on the east and west, resembling the humps of a camel. Because of its permanent glacier and year round snowy surface, the elderly Tibetan call the mountain Xiaotou Mountain, which has two meanings: First, in times of drought, its glacier stays put while all glaciers on surrounding mountains are melting. Second, there are many mythical tales about this mountain in which the glacier seems to mourn for the death of trekkers. An old Tibetan told me many sad

stories about hunters, herb collectors and climbers.

Before climbing the mountain, I knew almost nothing about Luotuo Feng. When they learned about our trekking trip, all the Tibetan locals leading the horses told us to be cautious because the mountain is 'evil'. My fellow trekkers and I only smiled and set off. The mountain guide named 'Old Six' had climbed Luotuo Feng twice. In 2004, his third older brother died in the avalanche tragedy. At the base camp site, the guide burned incense and toasted wine to his deceased brother. My companions and I also performed a praying ritual to the heavenly one.



#### A Joyful Night at the Base Camp

Luotuo Feng, standing at 5,484 metres, is composed of weathered and cracked granite. A permanent glacier of more than 1km flows in the valley of the peaks. The landscapes for climbing are diverse, including the stony slopes, the glacier, blends of snow and rock, a mixture of ice and rock, snowy slopes, serrated ridges and so on. It is suitable for moderately experienced climbers.

The weather was not bad when we set off. At the mouth of Changping Gulley, we filled in the registration for our climbing trip. We took the first tour bus of the day to the Lama Temple. Four horses carried our climbing gear. Then we arrived at the traditional BC site of Jiguanshi (Cock's Crest Rock). The tough challenge had started.

Gazing at the Yaomei Peak, I realised it had snowed the night before. The shimmering coating on the mountain gave a sense of sacredness and awe. The scenery of Changping Gulley was more fascinating than Haizi Gulley. Although it was a cloudy day, the misty weather gave strength to its mystery and charm. Rare tree species, green streams, mountain meadows, Tibetan family customs, and some passing backpackers all made our 21 km — trip more enjoyable and less tiring.

There were numerous rugged peaks of beauty on both sides of the gulley — it really deserves the title of Climbers' Heaven. We enjoyed the scenery all along the way and finally arrived at the Jiguanshi base camp at 2 pm This comfortable camp has an

abundant water supply and is surrounded by a large meadow. In the evening, we sat around the bonfire, drank light wine, and shared stories. We had a happy time.

#### Hypothermia at the C2 Campsite 🔨

The next day, the weather was similar to the day before. In the morning, we got up at 6 am and set off at 9 am for C1 (altitude of 4,680 m). The route to C1 was steep. Not long after starting our journey, a horse stumbled, falling down the slope, and it was reluctant to move forward again. We had no choice but to

- Climbing Luotuo Feng involves risk. For climbing up to 5,000 m or over, it's best that only climbers with experience to attempt the risky route.
- 2. Luotuo Feng, mainly composed of granite, resembles the humps of a camel.
- To be cautious, we hire four horses and two local workers to carry our gear.





- 1. When climbing on ice, you must be completely focused.
- 2. Taking a break on the cliff.
- 3. The snow got into our way. For safety reasons, we had no choice but to retreat downhill.

help push the horse so that we could continue on. Eventually the horse calmed down. At noon, we arrived at the C1 campsite.

We went up to C2 (altitude of 5,100 m) as planned. Walking along the rocky road on the right of the glacier and at the point of 5,100 m, we cut to the left and went up to the glacier.

When we left C1 at 2 pm, I asked the mountain guide how long it would take to get to C2. He said around three hours. Then, I assumed it would take four hours at most and chose not to change my clothing. I was wearing fleece garments and outdoor pants. My heat-insulated undergarment was inside my backpack which I was saving for going up the peak the following day. My down jacket was at C1. I didn't even have my raincoat with me.

We did not expect to walk in the rain soon after leaving C1. We were sweating continuously. When we changed our crampons, our clothes were soaked thoroughly. At 6 pm we were at the altitude of about 5,100 m. I was standing and shivering on the rock. I stuttered and asked the guide where C2 was. He said it would still take over one hour to get there on the snow-covered route. His reply struck me like thunder. Upon this information, my throat was choked with acid and it caused me to vomit twice. Everybody asked was concerned but I understood that it was impossible to retreat downward and we could only go uphill. I said I was fine and go.

#### Walking Alone on a Snowy Slope 🔨

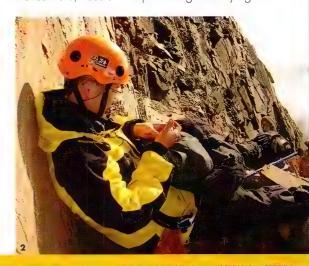
Before it got dark, a small ice ditch taught me a lesson about nature's might. The ice ditch was only about 30 m long, shallow in the middle and deep at each end. We chose to cross it in the middle, where it was less than 2 metres wide, walking from a lower

level to a higher one. My fellow trekkers before me succeeded in crossing it safely using ropes and ice axes. Siu Lin and I were the last to cross. As each person crossed the ditch one after another, the positions for secure footing on the opposite side of the ditch were changing continually. I focused on the footing and exerted strength. Oh my goodness! I was unable to secure my footing. The weight of my backpack caused me to lose my balance. I fell into the ditch and Siu Lin pulled me up. For my second attempt, I fell again. Siu Lin misunderstood that I was exhausted, turned back and helped me twice but he fell as well. The use of force to cross was not viable. When Siu Lin fell the third time, he decided to make some ice stairs. My headlamp shone on the right position so that Siu Lin could create two firm stairs with his ice axe to help us cross the ditch. While the others crossed the ditch easily, we spent 30 minutes on it due to the insecure footing.

After the ditch, snow came down heavier and the natural light was all gone. My headlamp only shone far enough to see my feet. Our team continued to cut to the left on the snowy slope but C2 was still not in sight. I told Siu Lin to catch up with the team and I would follow behind slowly. I didn't want the whole team to be encumbered by my hypothermia and exhaustion.

I had a special feeling walking alone on the snowy slope. All I could see and hear was the snow in the air and the whistling of the wind. My headlamp was shining on the footprints ahead of me, and my ice axe was making stabs, one after another, into the snow. I moved forward, one step at a time. At that moment, I felt extraordinary peace in my heart and my mind experienced no fear. All I knew was that my companions were waiting for me ahead.

I didn't know how long it was before I saw some sparkling lights ahead. Although it was just a few metres more, I couldn't help vomiting violently again.





#### Retreating Downward with Regret

Having set up the camp, I slipped into my sleeping bag, drank some hot water and ate chocolate. After 30 minutes, I regained my strength.

However, the wind and the snow were hitting the tent non-stop. The campsite was set on a snowy slope. Suddenly I realised that that night and the next we had to face a hostile environment. Scrambling to the peak, avalanche, getting lost...

When I got up in the morning, the wind had become less severe but the snow, accompanied by mist, continued. Visibility was low. We waited until 9 am but the weather didn't get better. For safety reasons, we made the decision to abort heading up to the peak. We would go again in future. We took a photo together and packed up our equipment.

Reaching the rocky section, we found that it was much different from the day before. The rocks were covered by snow. At an altitude of about 5,000 m, I tried to move downward at a small headwall. My foot landed on an unstable rock and I suffered stretch injury. It took me more than two weeks to recover after the trip.

I walked with my injured leg and moved forward slowly. It was only after five o'clock that I was able to reach the BC site. We set up the tents, made a fire and dried our soaked gear. For over 20 hours, since leaving the C1 site, we hadn't eaten a thing.

Translated by Ezekiel Pang

#### **Trekking Tips**

Unlike the large peak, the second peak and the third peak of Sigunian Mountain (Four Girls Mountain), Luotuo Feng is literally a snow mountain with an altitude of 5,484 m, a year round snow cap and even a permanent glacier. Luotuo Feng consists of an east and west peak. Climbing this mountain involves a certain degree of risk. It's best if you've had climbing experience of an altitude of 5,000 m or above before taking the risk. Being well versed with your mountain gear and protection measures is a necessity. In addition to possessing adequate rock and ice climbing skills and good physical strength, you should ensure you have no major health problems with your heart, brain, or lungs as well as your mind.

#### Itinerary

Day 1: Rent horses for transport of gear. Head for Jiguanshi, Changping Gulley temporary campsite (altitude: 3,700 m). Climbers should get there by walking so as to gradually adapt to changing air pressure

Day 2: In the morning, arrive at the BC site (altitude: 4,600 m). Practice your ice climbing skills and set up some of the fixed ropes.

Day 3: In the morning, climb up to C1 (altitude: 5,100 m). Ice skills climbing practice and road building.

Day 4: At dawn, scrambling up highest peak (altitude: 5,484 m) from C1. On site observation of the climbing route to the east peak. Then return to C1 or BC.
Day 5: Return to Chengdu.

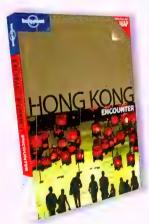


#### Editor's Cholos

#### **Hong Kong Encounter**

Make the best out of a short encounter!

Lonely Planet picked Hong Kong to be part of the *Encounter* series, making it the only Asian city feature in this guidebook collection. This has certainly boosted Hong Kong's international image, giving it recognition like other titles of the series — Barcelona, Dublin, Istanbul, New York, London and more. *Hong Kong Encounter* presents all perspective of the city, from 'surviving colonial architecture' to 'little-known noodle stores, bars and temples to mix with locals'. The *Encounter* series was developed



to maximise city experiences over a short stay, and Hong Kong certainly fits this criterion as a vibrant city with lots of personality. The book comes in a handy size with a equally handy map for tourists to bring around. This pocket book is not only useful but efficient.

Author: Steve Fallon First Edition: May 2007 Pubilsher: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd. Price: US\$11.99 / UK£6.99

#### **Premium Selection in Travel**

The book has a long title of *Lonely Planet Bluelist: The Best in Travel 2008*. What's a bluelist? Exactly the opposite of a 'blacklist'! Now you get it — Lonely Planet's pick of must-go places, recommendations from 'Best Brews' to 'Film Festivals' to 'Food Wonderlands', guides to endangered wildlife, snapshots of 'wow' moments and more.

For China, they have chose Guangzhou as the city on the rise, Shanghai as the world's most incredible urban city and Chengdu as a must-go city. Bluelist includes a travel planner highlighting the world's most unique festivals and a special section dedicated to the Islamic world.



Author: Lonely Planet staff, travellers and authors Third Edition: October 2007

Publisher: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd.

Price: US\$22.99

## The Glamour of China's Design Landscape

China is no doubt one of the most exciting places on the planet right now. China Living offers a detailed glimpse into the creative lifestyle of modern China. No longer is Chinese style considered traditional, it is now the pioneering spirit of design and architecture. The book unveils the most exciting homes in Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong — from modernist mountain villas to high-rise condominiums, and from artistic retreats in former industrial buildings to refurbished courtyard homes. The

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author is a former editor-in-chief of ELLE Decoration Hong Kong. She also writes articles for leading lifestyle publications in Asia.

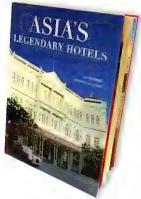
Author: Sharon Leece First Edition: November 2007 Pubilsher: Periplus Editions Price: US\$44.95

## Showcase of the most legendary hotels

Asia's legendary Hotels features some of Asia's most historically significant hotels. There are certainly lots of aspects to look at when rating a hotel. In this book, some hotels are famous for their rich histories, some are renowned for the superb levels of service and luxury. What's more? The book presents the hotels' architecture and interiors in the best full-colour photos. The big book is nothing but a vivid archive! Discover from Taj Mahal in India to the Raffles Hotel in Singapore, as well as from the Railway Hotel in Hua Hin to Sofitel Metropole Hanoi in Vietnam. The romance of travel is exactly about the journey itself turning to as much of an adventure as the destination.

Author: William Warren First Edition: October 2007 Pubilsher: Tuttle Publishing Price: US\$44.95





# 20 ~ 21 Feb Huangzhong Summon Ceremories at the Ta'er Lamasery

In the Huangzhong County, Qinghai Province, there will be large butter sculpture shows of Tibeten, Tu and Mongolian ethnic groups, sunning a huge picture of the Buddha and other Buddhist activities. Sorcerers' dances will be performed and a large-scale exhibition of butter sculpture will be held

5 Jan ~ 5 Feb

Harbin



## Harbin Ice and Snow Festival

Harbin, capital city of Heilongjiang Province, has up to 190 days of freezing season, it is known as a 'City of Ice' and a cradle of the ice-and-snow culture in the world. This annual event includes ice lantern show, snow sculpture display, international ice and snow sculpture competitions; winter swimming, ice hockey, speed-skating, alpine skiing, and cross-country skiing competitions; and ice and snow film festival exhibitions of paintings, calligraphy and photograph, folklore shows, ethnic song and dance parties, weddings on an ice-covered river.

# **2008**JAN/FEB

Jan ~ Feb

Jilin

#### Jilin Rime Festival

'Rime' is also known as 'snow willow', 'tree hanging' and 'ice flower'. This festival will also include grand ice and colourful lantern show, ice and snow games, releasing lanterns on the river, setting off fireworks and a parade of colourful boats. Local people will perform the northeastern Yangge dance. The folk festivals of the Manchu and Korean people are also celebrated. There is an ice sports complex in the centre of town. The city opens a tourist snow ground and ice entertainment arena on North Hill and Rosefinch Hill.



15 Jan ~ 19 Feb

Beijing

### Beijing Longqing Gorge Ice and Snow Festival

This will take place in Longqing Gorge of Yanqing County, north of Beijing. Displays of ice lanterns, fireworks on ice, recreational performances, fishing and other ice sports will be arranged. Tourists may participate in the ice and snow revelry festival and visit the Great Wall at Badaling and the Kangxi grasslands.



1 Jan ~ 21 Feb

**Jinzhong** 

#### Shanxi Shehuo Festival

'Shehuo' is a kind of folk performing arts with a long history in the middle part of Shanxi Province in China. It originates in Qing dynasty and Han Dynasty foreboding the prosperity and happiness. The festival presents intriguing folk arts performance of Shanxi and introduces the startling historical architectural wonder, such as Pingyao Ancient City, and Qiao's villa which embody the prosperity of business in Shanxi.



Now ~ 31 Jan

Taipei

## 2007 Jinshan and Wanli Hot Spring Festival

The Jinshan and Wanli area is rich in geothermal springs, including seabed, carbonic acid, sulfur and iron oxide springs, each with different beneficial effects. There will be over 30 hot spring operators this year, ensuring a wide range of choices for bathers, from five-star resorts to Balinese and Japanese style spas, and even budget-priced and free public baths. The festival organisers will also arrange a promotional hot spring expo at the Xinyi (Sinyi) Planning District in Taipei.

## CACO Tourism Index 2007 (Issues 307~312)

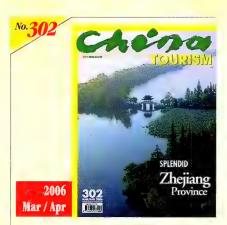
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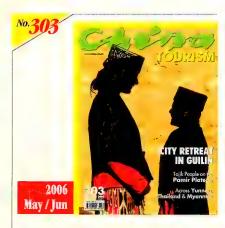
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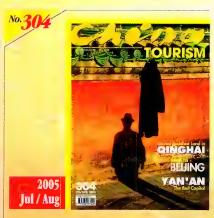
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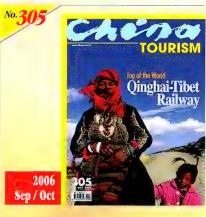
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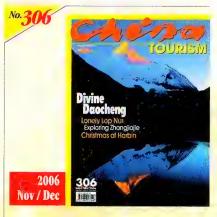
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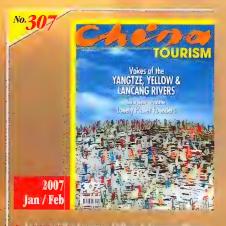
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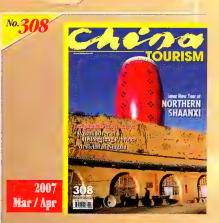
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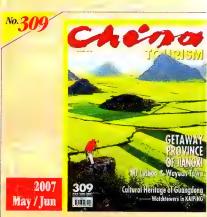
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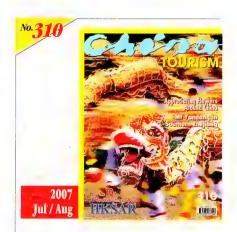


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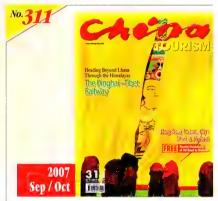


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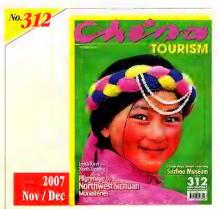
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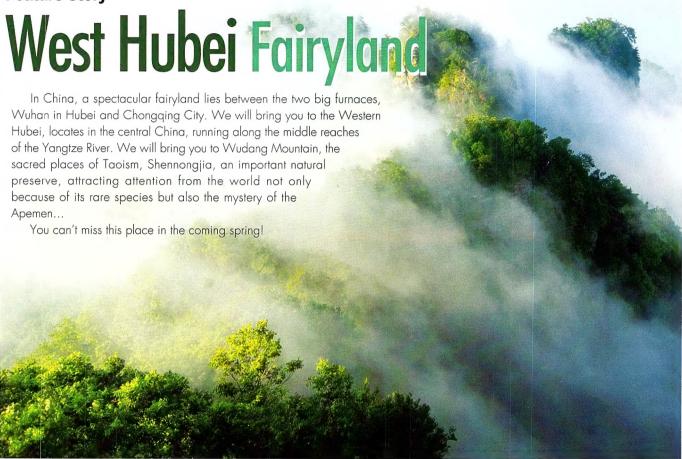
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#### **Culinary Delights**

#### Sichuan Cuisine in Chengdu

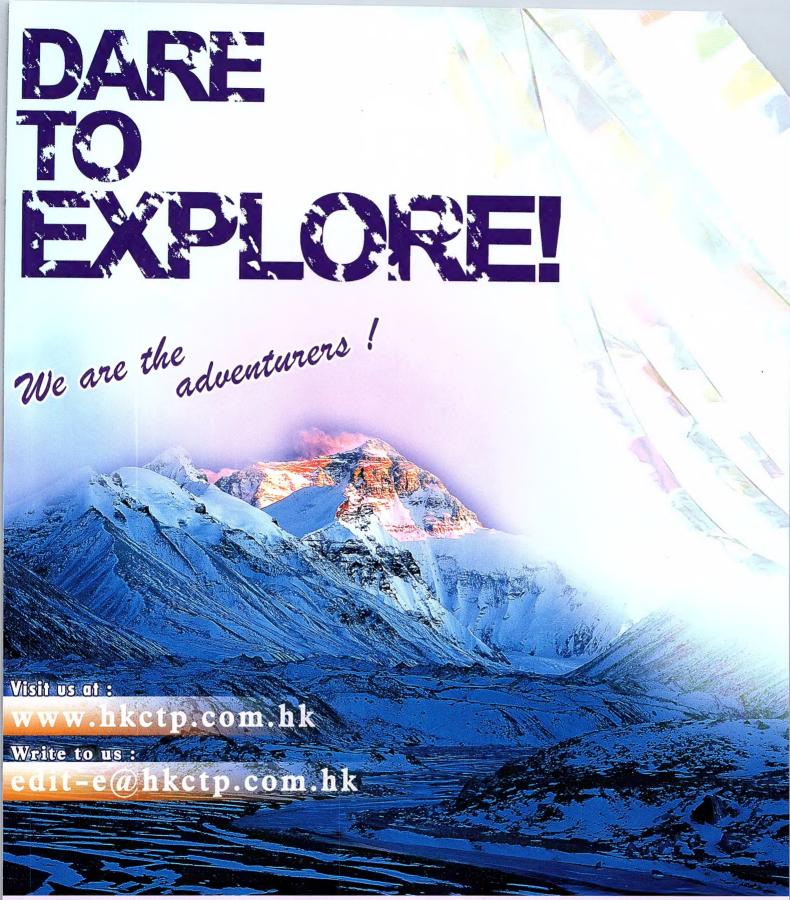
Chengdu is named the 'Food Paradise' and it is all true. Away from traditional snacks there are far more innovated dishes. It seems that Chengdu people would like to taste all cuisine around the world. They could not reconcile themselves to lag behind, thus create a wide variety of dishes...

#### **Discoveries**

#### Story of a photographer and a leprosy village

In these years Sichuan photographer Lin Qiang keeps contact with an isolated leprosy village of yi people deep inside the Daliang Mountain in Sichuan. He pays plenty of efforts, uses photographs as a means to present everything here to the world. He also provides material help to build a school, playground and road there.





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